

AUTHOR'S PREFACE

This is an English translation of my original Marathi thesis titled 'Vedateel Rashtra Darshan'. When I presented my Marathi thesis at the feet of my Satguru His Holiness Kanchi Kamakoti Peethadhipati Jagadguru Shri Shankaracharya Shri Chandrashekherendra Saraswati Swami Maharaj, His Holiness expressed that the thesis should be translated into English. It is the most precious reward of my life that this work is being published under the auspices of Kamakoti Prakashanam, with the blessings of His Holiness.

I am glad to acknowledge my gratitude to my friend Mr. S. S. Apte for translating this book into English.

I also acknowledge my gratitude to my friend Mr. K. Neelakantan of B. G. Paul and Co., Madras, for nicely printing and publishing this book.

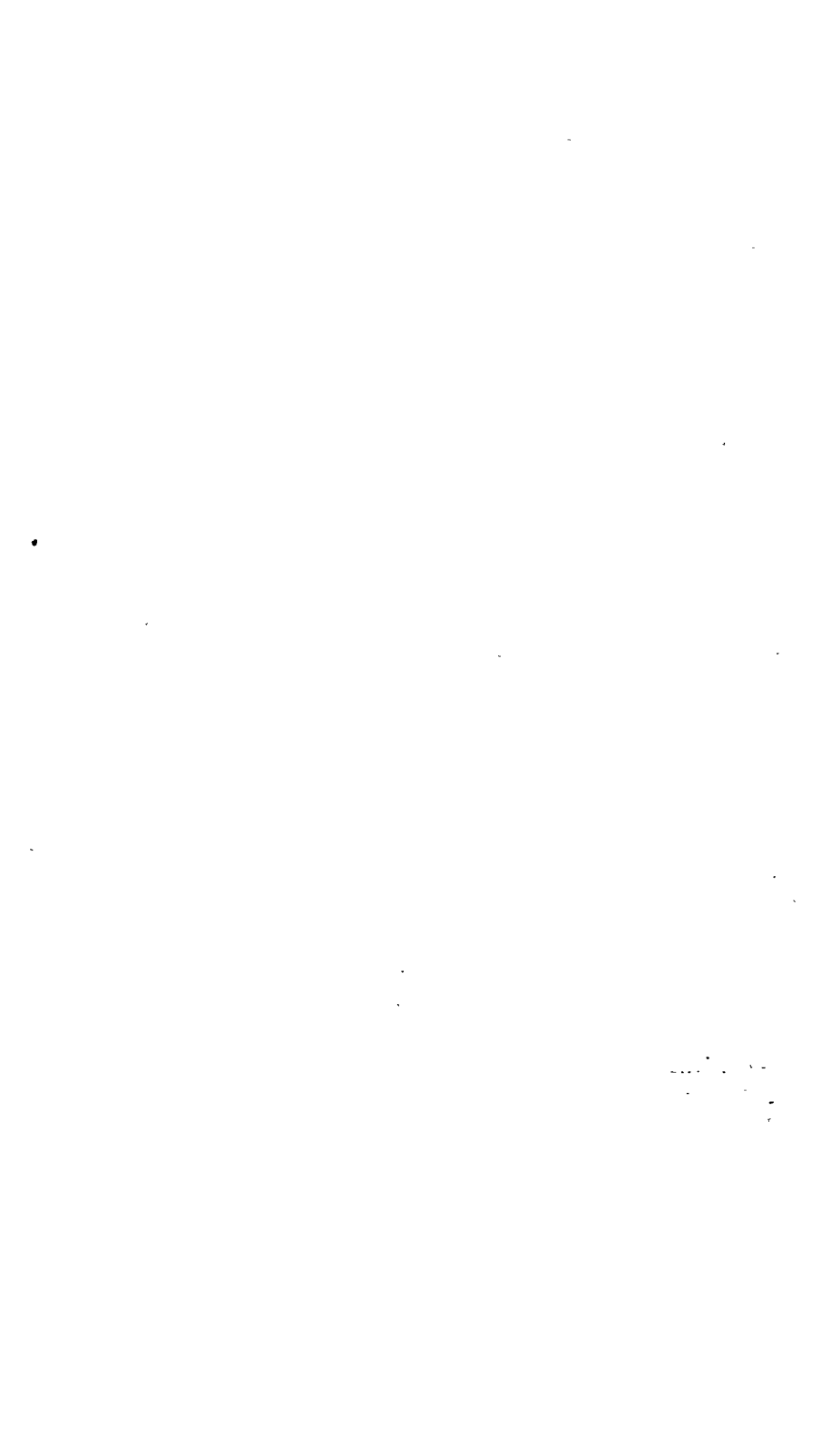
As regards the contents of the book itself, I say no more than place the volume in the hands of the lovers of Vedas, Sanathan Dharma and Bharat Mata. From the scholars and critics I humbly beg a favour to go through the whole book before they pronounce their judgment.

I humbly dedicate this work at the holy feet of His Holiness Shreemat Jagadguru Shri Shankaracharya of Kanchi Kamakoti Peetham.

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GLIMPSES OF THE VEDIC NATION

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

BHARAT has now become free after a struggle of a millenium. On her emancipation from slavery, the most vital, and surely the most comprehensive problem confounding her people has been the concept of nationhood. What cardinal principles should be recognised as the basis for the rejuvenation of the liberated nation? The world has indeed a lot of things to teach us; but it could not be ignored that our glorious past holds out golden lessons in our ancient heritage for us to adopt as the foundation on which our national life should be reconstructed. It is more imperative and essential to know and imbibe the spirit of our nationhood than to search for new forms and formulas.

When we think of the Bharatiya Nationhood, it at once appears to be unique and distinctive in its essence and form from the concepts of other peoples on the globe. All other nations are more like flies on the wheel of Time or the cycle of 'life and death'. All nations of the world have all been, very much like human beings subject to the law of birth, life and death. No nation is known so far to have escaped this law of nature except one and that is Bharat. In spite of ceaseless efforts to discover the secret, the birth and the beginning of Bharat have defied all the great research scholars. Cast a glance around and ask if there is in existence any nation elder or older than Bharat. The very first musings from the lips of 'Sharada', the 'Goddess of Learning' were uttered and echoed in this land of the Five Rivers, and those make the Rig-Veda of Bharat. It is in this Rig-veda, the oldest record of human thoughts and actions on earth, we get a full vision of the accomplished character and faultless concept of Bharat as a nation.

It is now an accepted fact that 'Avesta', the 'Book of Religion' of the present-day Persia is a post-Vedic composition. The Sumerian and Khaldian civilisations do not appear to be anterior to the Vedic. The Sindhu civilisation as evidenced in the Harappa and Mohen-jo-daro remains, is in fact, only one manifestation of the Hindu civilisation. A large number of symbols and illustrations from these excavations could be explained only by recourse to the general thought, life and history of the Bharatiya civilisation. On the ground of simple resemblance with other civilisations in some places to conclude that Bharat was the borrower, is indeed poor logic. Resemblances are deceptive and lead to risky conclusions both ways.

For instance, in Mohen-jo-daro, there is a picture of a tree from whose trunk two faces are shown to have sprouted out. There is one other picture of another tree in which six faces are shown to have emerged from the branches. Now some scholars imagine these to be the representations of 'ghosts' residing in trees. If the pictures represent the thoughts of a people supposed to be highly civilised, they cannot be interpreted in any primitive sense as has been attempted by the scholars. Reference to Rig-Vedic legends on the other hand can very satisfactorily explain the above pictures. In the 'Asyavamasya' hymn, there is a mention of two 'Suparnas', birds, one of which eats the fruit and the other keeps on gazing at it. There is also the mention of the 'Aja' (unborn or better not known when born), that protects the 'six abodes' in the universe. It is these highly philosophical ideas that are represented according to us by the carvings of the two trees in the Mohen-jo-daro.

A large number of unsolved mysteries in different civilisations can thus be explained and satisfactorily interpreted by reference to the ancient literature of Bharat. That should unmistakably point to the irrefutable truth as to who was the borrower and who the lender. Bharat is the oldest nation ever born and yet alive on the surface of this globe. A large number of younger nations appeared on the horizon, shone for a while like meteors and disappeared for ever in the

oblivion. The records of their civilisations are now the histories of short-lived nations. Where is that Greece of the omniscient Aristotle, and his worthy disciple Plato who gave science and philosophy to Europe? What happened to the Greek nation whose two proud heroes Philip and Alexander claimed to have conquered the world declaring impudently that they only were born to rule and the rest of humanity to serve them as slaves? What is the fate of that Rome of Caesar which once infused self-confidence in Europe and conferred on it the famous laws? Where are also those other Christian nations of old times which under the plea of saving the humanity and in the name of non-violence ran rivers of human blood on earth? The truth is all those have been swept off; and now purely materialistic nations nurtured on the principles of Capitalism and Communism have arisen in places of the old ones. The Russia of Zar is no more. It has been metamorphosed into a completely new State. There is China our neighbour. She has lived almost as long as ourselves. But the China of old was Buddhist till yesterday. The spirit of the Buddhist China was a gift of Bharat. Having accepted Communism as her ideology, the Chinese Nation has undergone a total conversion. It will have to be admitted without any reservation that as much a new nation has sprung up in China as the old one has been buried. It is on this account and in this sense we affirm that all the old nations of the world have disappeared from the surface of the earth. Only Bharat has survived defying death or change.

It may be asked what is the meaning of births and deaths, the rise and fall of nations? For in cases of all those nations which have disappeared and died, are not the lands, the seas, the people still existing? Does not the humanity inhabiting those various territories on earth inherit the blood of their forefathers? Why and how can it then be said that a nation is dead or that a new one is born? An individual has his individuality. A nation has its national spirit and character. It is called its 'Asmita', the essence or the spirit. It is the particular characteristics which distinguish one thing from the other and their consciousness that is called the 'Asmita'.

the spirit of a thing. 'Asmita' is a quality of only a sentient being which has consciousness and knowledge. The nature of the soul and spirit of one nation which distinguishes it from other nations is then the 'Asmita', as the essence of its nationhood. There must be a common current running in every individual of the national society. It is in the existence, affirmation and manifestation of this 'Asmita', that a people rise to full nationhood. It is only the community of people throbbing with the sense, sentiments and the spirit of oneness which deserves to be called a nation. When such a community or the people living in a distinct piece of land abandons this their distinguishing consciousness of the spirit of unity and oneness, then indeed the nation is said to have committed its suicide. It soon dies and disappears. After such a forsaking of the spirit, when the people adopt new forms and formulas of life then the nation is said to have been converted or changed. It may be that such a transformation of a nation may lend it a newer spirit and splendour a while. Such a nation may accelerate its progress. But that does not refute the fact that the old is dead. When it is said that the European nations from the days of the Greek history to the Zardom have died, our meaning is clear. It is in this sense that we claim Bharat which had to face many a death-struggles, has survived with its spirit and soul unchanged. The soul and spirit of the Bharatiya people today are exactly what they have been through thousands of years past. It is in the same unbroken spirit and thought that the people of Bharat are continuing their course of life. For instance, the regard and sentiments which the 'Cow' inspired in the people of Bharat in the days of Atharva Veda, and then in the days of Mahabharat, milleniums of years back, persist to this day in this middle of the 20th century. If the President is to be considered as the true representative of the people of a nation, then it is apparent that the President of Bharat, who carries in his heart the same high regard and reverence for the sacredness of the 'Cow', as the Rishis of the old times or the kings and common people of the Maha-

bharat days, represents the sentiments of the people. It is an indication that the nation is unchanged.

Rama and Krishna worshipped the river Ganga. That very sentiment persists in the Hindu society of the present times. In other nations the relics of history become show pieces in their museums. But in India today, the whole society carries in its thoughts and actions all those sentiments and feelings with which the ancient forefathers were inspired thousands of years back. There is nothing like a relic or a forsaken idea in India. Even narrow minds and parochial personalities who get themselves encased in their territorial or provincial prides and prejudices have unreservedly admitted that the spirit of Bharatiya nationhood has persisted since the pre-historic ages right upto the present times in an unchanged unbroken form and current. This persistence of the essence of Bharatiya nationhood which is a miracle according to some is a patent fact. It is for this reason that we consider our past to be worthy of becoming a sure and unshakable foundation for the future. It is the firm conviction of our gifted prophets that the Providence has bequeathed this national heritage to the people of Bharat for the saving of humanity. Imbued with this belief an individual born in this land identifies himself with every particle on the surface of the earth. It is this spiritual identification with the Universe, a psychic consciousness of oneness, that is the essence of our nationhood. The spirit which the word 'Arya' inspired the Aryas of the Vedic age to carry the message, and the mission of 'Aryanising the humanity' (civilising the universe), also continues to enthuse our great thinkers and heroes of today. Mahayogi Arvind claimed that heritage and carried on the mission throughout his life with unshakable faith in its significance and efficacy.

Immediately after his release from the prison, Arvind addressed the memorable meeting in Uttarpara, near Calcutta. His address on the occasion (which turned out to be the last speech delivered by the great Yogi in the public) is considered to be the essence of the Hindu philosophy. It is an eloquent commentary on the basic concept of Hindu nationhood.

In that unforgettable address, Arvind has bequeathed the message which was revealed to him in the seclusion of the prison. He observes: 'Now that I have come out, even in these few minutes, a word has been suggested to me which I had no wish to speak. The thing I had in my mind "He" has thrown from it; and what I speak is under an impulse and compulsion.'

(Uttarpara Speech: By Shri Aurobindo, p. 5).

'When you go forth, speak to your nation always this word, that it is for the Sanatana Dharma that they arise; it is for the world and not for themselves that they arise. I am giving them freedom for the service of the world. When, therefore, it is said that India shall rise, it is the Sanatana Dharma that shall rise. When it is said that India shall be great, it is the Sanatana Dharma that shall be great. When it is said that India shall expand, and extend herself, it is the Sanatana Dharma that shall expand and extend itself over the world. It is for the Dharma and by the Dharma that India exists. To magnify the religion, means to magnify the country.'

(Uttarpara Speech, p. 17).

'It is the Hindu religion only because the Hindu nation has kept it; because in this peninsula, it grew up in the seclusion of the Seas and the Himalayas; because in this sacred and ancient land, it was given as a charge to the Aryan race to preserve through the ages.'

(Uttarpara Speech, p. 18).

'I spoke once before with this force in me and I said then that this movement is not a political movement and that nationalism is not politics but a religion, a creed, a faith. I say it again today, but I put it in another way. I say no longer that Nationalism is a creed, a religion, a faith; I say that it is the 'Sanatana Dharma' which for us is Nationalism. This Hindu nation was born with the Sanatana Dharma. With it, it moves, and with it, it grows. When the Sanatana

Dharma declines, then the Nation declines; and if the Sanatana Dharma were capable of perishing, with the Sanatana Dharma, it would perish. The Sanatana Dharma—that is nationalism. This is the message that I have to speak to you.’

(Uttarpara Speech, p. 20).

That was the message of Mahayogi Arvind. If according to his direction an effort is made to re-name appropriately the nationhood of Bharat after taking into full consideration the form, character and spirit of its unique nation-personality, despite the current synonyms like the Bharatiya nation, the Hindu nation, etc., which came in use during the different epochs, the only correct and significant term will be the Vedic Rashtra. The sacred message which was entrusted to the Bharatiya people to be conveyed to the whole humanity, according to Mahayogi Arvind, was first revealed in this land through the medium and substance of the Vedas. It is in that sense the Vedas are recognised all over Bharat as ‘the source of all Dharma’.

After the attainment of freedom from the slavery of centuries, the puzzling problem which confronts Bharat is her reconstruction. It is a miracle that the Bharat which, was trampled over by successive waves of foreign aggressors has in the end risen up unbound and free. What should be the soul and spirit, the character and form of our emancipated nationhood hereafter? Should the Bharatiya people forsake their inherent nationhood which helped them to survive decay and death and adopt a new philosophy metamorphosing her traditional way of life like the Chinese? Would it not amount to suicide? Should not the Bharatiya people reinforce the foundation of their national structure shaken a bit by the incessant onslaught of hostile agencies, human and elemental? If the Bharatiya nationhood were weak and unworthy to survive, it would have died long before. That it has outlived is a proof of its vitality. It is therefore profitable to examine the excellence of this nationhood as well as to survey the basic plan on which the edifice of the nation was erected. It is impossible to visualise correctly the body and soul of the

Bharatiya nation without the study of the Vedas. The Dharma, the morals, the laws and the philosophy of life which have sustained the Bharatiya people during millenniums beyond memory in the hard struggle and competition of humanity are expounded in the Vedas. The study of the Vedas will profit not only the Bharatiya people, but surely the whole humanity. Dr. S. V. Ketkar observes in this connection:

‘Vedas are the prime source of all knowledge and learnings. This is so self-evident an axiom that it needs no pleading. The Vedas are the relics of the most ancient records which have come down to us throwing light upon the then life and conditions in the prehistoric times of our as well as of the many European peoples’, common ancestors. On this account they are given the foremost place in the documentary history of the world by all scholars including the Europeans who have now acknowledged this fact. So far as the Hindus are concerned, there is no dispute that our learning, knowledge, philosophy and our way of life have been moulded and influenced by the Vedas. For thousands of years the Bharatiya people without any exception have regarded the Vedas as the revelation of the ‘Almighty’. The very expression ‘Vedavakya’ (Gospel), means an unchallengeable truth all over the Hindusthan. No study of the culture and civilisation of Bharat, of the ways of life, and the thoughts which guide it here, in short, the total attitude of the Bharatiya people towards secular and spiritual existence can be possible or complete without reference to the Vedas. Having realised that all their efforts to gather the true history of their forefathers will not be fruitful without the acquaintance, with the conditions of life reflected in these ancient records—even the European authors have now come to regard the Vedas with reverence. Scholars in the East belonging to countries like China and Japan must of course approach the Vedas if they desire to understand Buddhism in its entirety. Buddhism was born in this land. It was a reaction of a particular set of circumstances prevailing in the later Vedic Age. It is impossible to understand Buddhism without knowing the conditions of life in

which it took rise, namely the later Vedic-life. It is a truism that the new one is built upon the old. To know the new one must understand the old. What do we see in the West? It was to replace the Old Testament that the New came on the horizon. Can the Christians understand the New Testament without looking into the Old? The knowledge of the Vedic philosophy and practices is therefore essential for the study of the new faiths and religions and the circumstances in which they 'arose in the land.'

(Maharashtriya Jyankosh Prastawana Khanda,
Part II Vedvidya: By Dr. S. V. Ketkar).

Prof. Max Muller has indeed emphatically pleaded that the first chapters of the history of humanity could be traced in the books of the Vedas and therefore those who want to study the evolution of man cannot dispense with them. It is our conviction and we want to present it as a proposition that in the Vedas we discover not merely the seeds of the concept of Bharatiya nationhood but its fully developed manifestation. The same national spirit is seen permeating in the vast expanses over which the Hindu culture and civilisation came to hold its sway. We therefore propose to trace the concept of our nationhood, its character and form, its birth and progress to perfection in the annals of the Vedas. It is our belief that our present complex nationhood is the direct development of the Vedic ideas. Very happily, though the present form seems to have changed immensely, the consciousness that its roots and branches lie in the Vedas has been always alive.

It is no surprise that the Vedas have attained a unique importance and place of honour in the literature of this land as also of the whole world. The Vedas have been an effective factor in the constitution of our nationhood. There was a time when implicit faith in the Vedas was a *sine-qua-non* to belong to the Hindu fold. The story of King Prateep is fully illustrative of this belief. His eldest son Devapi disregarded the Vedas. The crime was considered to be so grave that he was disqualified to inherit the throne of his father. Disbelief in the

Vedas then became a disqualification for the rights of inheritance.

This regard for the Vedas was not developed only in the post-Vedic literature and life; but was actually prevalent or rather inherent in the Vedic age also. That they were the revelations of the Almighty and as such equally potent like the 'Omnipotent' was affirmed in many a passage in the Vedas themselves. This is an indication that the Vedas had attained high regard and importance, even prior to the days when the present extant portions of Rig-Veda were composed or compiled. The tradition of the recantation and study of Vedas had been started definitely before the vast material was arranged in the form of books as it is available to us today. There is no gainsaying that 'Ramayan', 'Bharat' and similar other literary creations are of very great value. The authors of these precious treasures of learning are in fact considered in this country to be the incarnations of God. But none of these great fountains of knowledge can rise to or rival the high status of the Vedas. Some of the Vedic poems which we have inherited express a belief that the Vedas were not composed or written by human hands, but were revealed by the mouth of God. It is the firm faith of the Hindus that God and the Vedas are identical. The Vedas are as without beginning or end, as omnipotent, as omniscient, as self-revealing and all-pervading, as God himself. This faith is seen persisting in this land since the very days of the Vedas right up to the great poets Tulsidas and Tukaram. It will be worthwhile to note a number of views bearing on this faith expressed during different epochs. That will help us to judge how that faith in the eternity of the Vedas continues without a break.

There are in the Vedic books a number of places where we are told how and in what order they were revealed.¹ In one place the three Vedas are said to have been produced from

1. तेभ्यस्त्रयेभ्यस्त्रयो वेदा अजायन्त ।

अग्नेर्ऋग्वेदो वायोर्यजुर्वेदः सूर्यात् शामवेदः ॥

शतपथब्राह्मण ।

(Satapatha Brahmana).

the 'Fire', 'Wind' and the 'Sun' in order. In one most reputed piece we are exhorted—'O, ye, listen, all this—the Rig-Veda, Yajur-Veda, Sama Veda, Atharva Veda, all this—the histories—the legends—Puranas—are all the breaths of that "Almighty"—the Supreme element.'²

In the famous 'Purusha' hymn of the Rig-Veda—it is asserted that 'the Rig-Veda, Sama, Chhanda and Yajur-Veda were all the gifts of the sacrifice which the Gods performed in that remote age.'³

The Upanishads one and all repeat and confirm the same faith in the sacred source of the Vedas, namely, the breath of the Almighty and their sovereignty as the absolute truth.

There is one verse in the Rig-Veda which avers an uncommon belief in the supreme value of the Vedic mantras. The Singer declares, 'What of this universe, even these powers which move it and those which have created it, are all contained in the mantras of the Vedas. One who has realised how the powers lie concealed in the Mantras, can discover and demonstrate them; but one who has not mastered the secret—what can the hymns help him?''⁴

These beliefs and sentiments of the Vedic bards have been almost borrowed in letter and spirit by the authors of the Smriti-books. Out of the large number of these law-books called Smritis we quote below from the Smriti of Manu. This law-book of Manu has been regarded as the most thoughtful

2. अरेऽस्य महतो भूतस्यनिश्चितमेतद्यद् ऋग्वेदो ।

यजुर्वेदः सामवेदोऽथर्वांगिरस इतिहासपुराणम् ॥

बृहदारण्यकोपनिषत् ।

(Brihadarayakopanishad).

3. तस्माद्यज्ञात्सर्वहुतः ऋचः सामानि जज्ञिरे ।

छंदांसि जज्ञिरे तस्माद्यजुस्तस्मादजायत ॥

(Rig-Veda Purushasukta).

I. ऋचो अक्षरे परमे व्योमन् यस्मिन्देवा अधिविश्वे निषेदुः ।

यस्तन्न वेद किमृचा करिष्यति य इत तद्विदुः त इमे समासते ॥

(Rig-Ved 1-164-39).

(१-१६४-३९)

exposition of the laws for a highly developed society. There have been variations, amendments and improvements on the laws of Manu—and yet the Smṛiti is held in highest reverence and of utmost authority all over the land. The Law-giver Manu observes:

‘From Agni, Vayu and Surya Brahmadeva created the Rig-Veda, the Yajur Veda and the Sama Veda to accomplish the “Yajna” (Sacrifice), successfully.’²

‘A wise man should first comprehend all this by his inward vision and with implicit faith in the authority of the Vedas he should abide by the laid-down prescriptions.’

‘It is the Vedas which are called the Śrutis. The law-books and the treatise on morals, laid down by such great social philosophers like Manu are called the Smṛitis. Logic should not mislead human behaviour in opposition to the prescriptions of the Śrutis and Smṛitis, because on these are built the whole system of social ethics and codes of conduct. Logic and intellectual wrangling must not be used to contradict or analyse these. One who disregards these prime sources of “Dharma” such a non-believer and despiser of the Vedas deserves to be boycotted by the wise people. Those who therefore desire to know the “Dharma” which governs the huma-

II. अग्निवायुरविभ्यस्तु त्रयं ब्रह्मा सनातनम् ।

दुदोह यज्ञसिद्धयर्थमृग्यजुः सामलक्षणम् ॥ (१-२३)

(Manu Smṛiti, 1-23)

III. सर्वं तु समवेक्ष्येदं निखिलं ज्ञानचक्षुषा ।

श्रुतिप्रामाण्यतो विद्वान् स्वधर्मे निविशेत् वै ॥ (२-८)

(Manu Smṛiti, 2-8)

IV. श्रुतिस्तु वेदो विज्ञेयो धर्मशास्त्रं तु वैस्मृतिः ।

ते सर्वार्थेष्वमीमांस्ये ताभ्यां धर्मो हि निर्बभौ ॥

योऽवमन्येत ते मूले हेतुशास्त्राश्रयाद् द्विजः ।

स साधुभिर्बहिष्कार्यो नास्तिको वेदनिन्दकः ॥ (२-१०-११)

धर्मं जिज्ञासमानानां प्रमाणं परमं श्रुतिः । (२-१३)

nity must first acknowledge the Vedas as the highest authority.'

'The Vedas are indeed the eyes for the Gods and men. It is not possible to discover the secret of the Vedas merely on the strength of intellect. Only he who knows the meaning of the Vedas and the Shastras deserves the leadership, the command of men and armies, the Kingship, the right to rule people and control them with punishment. One who realises the secret of the Vedas and the Shastras, wherever he may be, whether in a palace or a hermitage, he attains identification with the Brahma in this world itself. Such a Brahman who has the Rig-Veda on his tongue and its secret in his heart, whether he massacres all the three worlds, or eats at the hands of any person anywhere, remains sinless and spotless.'

(Manu Smriti, 12:94, 12:100, 12:102, 11:26)

Epics and Histories like Ramayan and Mahabharat which bear our culture and civilisation, also hold the Vedas in the same high reverence. Valmiki, the author of Ramayan, when he taught his composition to Lava and Kusha, Rama's sons, emphasised the fact that he was doing so for their better understanding of the Vedas.

Both Ramayan and Mahabharat present their ideal heroes as the devoted students and worshippers of the Vedas. The Mahabharat all through purports to inspire a belief that the

I. पितृदेवमनुष्याणां वेदश्चक्षुः सनातनम् ।

अशक्यं चाप्रमेयं च वेदशास्त्रमिति स्थितिः ॥ (१२-९४)

सैनापत्यं च राज्यं च दण्डनेतृत्वमेव च ।

सर्वलोकाधिपत्यं च वेदशास्त्रविदर्हति ॥ (१२-१००)

वेदशास्त्रार्थतत्त्वज्ञो यत्र तत्राश्रमे वसन् ।

इहैवलोके तिष्ठन्स ब्रह्मभूयाय कल्पते ॥ (१२-१०२)

हत्वा लोकानपीमांस्त्रीनश्नन्नपि यतस्ततः ।

ऋग्वेदं धारयन्विप्रो नैनः प्राप्नोति किंचन ॥ (११-२६१)

(2: 10, 2: 11, 2: 13)

II. "वेदोपबृंहणार्थाय तावग्राहयत प्रभुः" । (४-६)

(Valmiki Ramayana, Balakanda, 4:6)

Vedas were the sacred gift of the Almighty. In the Bhishma Parva it is said:

‘Achyuta created the Veda and “Saraswati” out of his own mind and then said—look at this Saraswati, the mother of the Vedas who is enshrined in my mind.’

The Khil-parva of Mahabharat describes the Vedas in the following words:—

‘Brahmadev then created the Mother of the Vedas Gayatri from which he brought out the four Vedas, The Rig, Yajur, and Sama Vedas, were created for the accomplishment of the “Yajna” (sacrifice).’

The Purana literature also holds the Vedas with equal reverence. Bhagwata Purana says:—

‘The Prajapati created the four Vedas with the “Omkar” and the “Vyahruti” from his four mouths. Once while he was seated in meditation the four Vedas got form and shape from his four mouths in the four directions.’

Other Puranas like the Markandeya, Vishnu, Vayu, all give similar descriptions. While all Puranas give the same identical version of this belief, the Bhagwata adds that the Vedas are the manifestation of the different aspects or forms of the same ‘Omkar’.

In the ninth Skandha of the book we are told:—

III. एक एव पुरावेदः प्रणवः सर्ववाङ्मयः ।

देवो नारायणो नान्य एकोऽग्निवर्ण एव च ॥ (४८)

सरस्वतीं च वेदांश्च मनसः ससृजेऽच्युतः । ३०-१९

वेदानां मातरं पश्य मत्स्थां देवीं सरस्वतीम् ॥ (१२९-२०)

(Valmiki Ramayana, Balakanda, 4:6).

I. ततोऽसृजद्वै त्रिपदां गायत्रीं वेदमातरम् । (११-५)

भकरोच्चैव चतुरो वेदान्गायत्रिसम्भवान् ॥ (११-६)

ऋचो यजूंषि सामानि निर्ममे यज्ञासिद्धवे । (१०-४७)

(Harivamsha, 11:5, 11:6, 10:47).

II. तेनासौ चतुरो वेदांश्चतुर्भिर्वदनैः प्रभुः । (४४-१२-६)

ऋग्यजुःसामाऽथर्वाख्यान्वेदान्पूर्वादिभिः सुखैः ॥ (३-१२-३७)

(Bhagwat Skandha, 12:6-44, Skandha, 3:12-37).

पुरुषस एवासीत् त्रयी त्रेतामुखेनृप ।

अग्निना प्रजया राजा लोकं गान्धर्वमेयिवान् ॥ (४९-९-१४)

(Bhagavat Skanda, 9: 14-43, 49).

‘Formerly “Omkar” was the only Veda; Narayan was the only Deity, and the common fire was the only fire. Then there was only one Varna. It was since the days of the King-Pururava that they became three-fold, three Vedas, three fires, and three Varnas. It was with the worship of the fires and by the service of his subjects that he became self-fulfilled and went to the Gandharva-Loka.’

Like the authors of the Puranas, the great commentators of the Vedas also hold the same regard and faith in them. The greatest Commentator—Sayanaacharya—considers Vedas as the very breath and expression of the Great Almighty who created the Universe out of them, and offers that Great Lord, the very source of all learnings, his salutations in the beginning of his Rig-Veda Bhashya commentary.

The Nyaya and Vaisesika philosophers accept everything in the Vedas as fully authoritative as they consider them to be the revelations of the Almighty. Kapila, the founder of the Samkhya philosophy, as well as Jaimini, the propounder of the Mimamsa, believe the Vedas to be self-proved and self-revealed. The Yoga-philosophy also confirms the same belief. Badarayan, the author of the ‘Brahma-Sutras’, in two of his Sutras has proclaimed the Vedas to be unassailable beyond any doubt or challenge.

Shri Shankar, the greatest of the Adwaita philosophers who has said the last and the most irrefutable word on the philosophy of Monotheism—or the ‘end of knowledge’—has expressed his unshakable belief in the truth of the Vedas in following words:

‘Brahma is the cause of the supreme science of knowledge, the Rig-Veda, which is an excellent reservoir of all learnings,

I. यस्य निश्चितं वेदा यो वेदेभ्योऽखिलं जगत् ।

निर्ममे तमहं वन्दे विद्यातीर्थमहेश्वरम् ॥

II. “वेदिकं ईश्वरोक्त्वात् सर्वमेवप्रमाणम् ”

III. “शास्त्रयोनित्वात् ” “अत एव च नित्यत्वम् ”

which is the light-house revealing all the meanings and which can be described only as Omni-science. Where else but from an Omniscient knower can rise up such a store-house of knowledge like the Rig-Veda which is all comprehensive and perfect? It is common knowledge that the author of a perfect system of thought is greater in knowledge than the science which he propounds. For instance, the Science of Grammar is just a piece of evidence of the unfathomable knowledge of its father, Panini. How can we describe or gauge the richness of knowledge of the Almighty who could, as easily as men breathe, reveal the Rig-Veda which is the deepest mine of all knowledge divided into innumerable sections such as Gods, animals, birds, beasts, men, colour, caste, and 'ashram'? The eternal value of the Vedas as expounded by Shri Shankar in his gloss on the Sutra 'Ata Evacha Nityatvam' is the one conclusion consistent with or the culmination of the unbroken tradition of the theologists, held aloft by the Great Grammarian Patanjali in his Sutra 'Nityah Shabdah' ('the word is eternal'), by Jaimini in 'Nityastu Syat Darshanasya Paratharathavat', by Kanada in 'Tat Vachanat Amnayasya Pramanyam', in the Yoga Shastra in its Sutra, 'Grunati Vedadwara Upadishati Satyan arthan Sa Guru', and in the Sankhya philosophy in the Sutra, 'Nijasakti Abhivyakte Swatah Pramanyam.'

The Acharyas following Shri Shankar, *viz.*, Ramanuja, Madhva, Vallabha and others who are the founders of various schools of philosophies have declared without exception their unreserved faith in the Vedas. They have gone indeed

I. "महतः ऋग्वेदादिः शास्त्रस्य अनेकविद्यास्थानोपबृंहितस्य, प्रदीपवत्सर्वार्थावबोधिनिः, सर्वज्ञकल्पस्य योनिः कारणं ब्रह्म । न हीदृशस्य शास्त्रस्य ऋग्वेदादिलक्षणस्य, सर्वज्ञगुणान्वितस्य सर्वज्ञान्यतः संभवोऽस्ति । यद्यद्विस्तरार्थं शास्त्रं यस्मत्पुरुषविशेषात्सम्भवति, यथा व्याकरणादि पाणिन्यादेर्ज्ञैकदेशार्थमपि स ततोऽप्यधिकतरं विज्ञान इति प्रसिद्धं लोके । किमुक्तव्यमनेकशाखाभेदभिन्नस्य देवतिर्यङ्मनुष्यवर्णाश्रमादित्रिविभागहेतोर्ऋग्वेदाख्यस्य सर्वज्ञानाकारस्य अप्रयत्नेनैव लीलान्यायेन पुरुषनिःश्वासवत् अस्मान्महतो भूताद्योनेः संभवः ।

“शास्त्रयोनिर्त्वात्”

(Shri Shankara's Bhashya on The Badarayana Sutra).

a little bold in accusing even the Great Shankar as a concealed Bauddha' for his alleged depreciating the Vedas, while assessing their value *vis-a-vis* the 'Adhyatma'—or Self-knowledge.

Shri Kumarila Bhatta, the great Mimamsak while speaking of the Vedas eulogises their greatness and expresses his regard for them in the following words: 'The secret of knowledge of the Vedas lies in the fact that by their means one can know what is impossible to understand by the use of our senses, or by pure logic. It may be possible to grasp the simple common features of a subject, but its secret or speciality can be learnt only with the help of the Vedas.'

Such is the eternal and uncompromising faith in the Vedas seen throughout the ages in the Bharatiya nation in an unbroken tradition. Our present religious convictions though they are derived from the prescriptions in the Shrutis, Smritis and the Puranas, there is no doubt that all the 'samskaras', rites and sacraments from the very birth or rather from conception to death of a Hindu individual are as ordained in the Vedas. It may be said that the idols and the deities which have become the objects of religious worship are of Puranic origin. Nevertheless, it cannot be forgotten that though the faces, forms and names of the deities have changed, the Mantras with which they are worshipped have remained constant. In the first and the most important ceremony of initiation, which, now has become merely a formal one, the most important function is the initiation of the Vedic Gayatri-mantra. In the worship of Lord Shiva and Ganapati both of whom are indeed Puranic deities, the mantras are the Vedic mantras addressed to Brahmanaspati and the Rudra. It is well known how the Vedic hymn of Purusha Suktà has acquired a dominating influence in our religious and ritualistic life.

प्रत्यक्षेणानुमानेन यस्तूपायो न बुध्यते ।

एनं विदन्ति वेदेन तस्माद्वेदस्य वेदता ।

I. "तस्मात् सिद्धेऽपि सामान्ये विशेषेनागमादिते" ॥ (१०८)

(Shlokavartika Pratyakhasutra, Shloka 108).

Jnaneshwar, the founder of the Varkari Sect in the Bhakti cult, who successfully revealed to the common masses the easiest way of acquiring Moksha (eternal freedom from life and death), by simply resorting to a complete surrender to the Almighty has also exhibited a faith in the Vedas which leaves no doubt about their greatness even in the minds of those who discarded all other paths except that of Bhakti.

Tukaram, another illustrious saint of the 17th century tells us that: 'Only he knew the meaning and truth of the Vedas; let others carry its burden on their heads.' This not only confirms his self-confidence, but reveals unmistakably the general regard for the Vedas in the minds of the people round-about him in the then contemporary society.

We have given a broad view of the living tradition of faith in the Vedas from the Vedic times right up to the days of great saint Tukaram. This is a very surprising phenomenon that even the great Buddha who contended that no good would result to the soul of man from the Vedas, does not in the least suggest that they are false or a fraud.

The Jain sect which now-a-days contends that their's is an independent religion, has betrayed a confusion in the fact that their scriptures mention that the real Vedas have disappeared and only they are aware of their truth. This sort of self-contradiction is a proof how much influence was exercised by the Vedas on the thoughts of atheists also. Faith in the Vedas, had, as if become a symbol or an essential character of a constituent of this Bharatiya nation. It was possibly for that reason that the greatest visionary of the new Bharat, Lokamanya Bala Gangadhar Tilak has given the following definition of a Hindu:

I. प्रामाण्यबुद्धिर्वेदेषु साधनानामनेकता ।

उपास्यानामनियमः एतद्धर्मस्यलक्षणम् ॥

धर्ममेनं समालम्ब्य विधिभिः संस्कृतस्तु यः ।

श्रुतिस्मृतिपुराणैकैः क्रमप्राप्तेरथापि वा ॥

स्वे स्वे कर्मण्यभिरतः श्रद्धाभक्तिसमन्वितः ।

शास्त्रोक्ताचारशीलश्च स वै हिंदुः सनातनः ॥

'Faith and devotion to the Vedas, diversity of paths, no restraint on the object or ideas of worship are the signmarks or the characteristics of Dharma. One who is initiated in proper manner with all the prescriptions and forms, one who follows an avocation of life, which has been prescribed for him by scriptures, or which has fallen to him by conventions or class regulations, one who adheres to a prescribed form of life with unmixed faith and devotion, is a Hindu in the traditional sense.'

Thus acceptance of the Vedas as the unchallengable truth, of the diversity of paths to reach the eternal bliss, and thirdly complete freedom regarding the objects of worship make the qualities and characteristics of the Hindu religion. One who adheres to this religion and follows its destined path of life is indeed a Hindu.

We, who have embarked upon the task of recreating our national life must first correctly understand the character and nature of the foundation on which the temple of our nation has to be rebuilt.

CHAPTER II

THE MODERN METHOD OF VEDIC STUDIES

THE uninterrupted tradition of the unique and unadulterated faith in the Vedas right from the pre-historic times to the present age is a wonderful phenomenon in the history of humanity. In this nation which had reached the height of tolerance towards faiths and religions, never was an effort made to force a faith, or to demand an adherence to it on the point of sword. The histories of other faiths, particularly Christianity and Islam, have betrayed on the other hand, staggering instances of intolerance. Inhuman punishments merely for the expression of a scientific opinion that the earth is round, setting on fires the temples of knowledge simply for the fear that the books in them may belittle the importance or repudiate the theories of their faith, under an excuse of preserving peace in the world, massacres of humanity in the most unimaginable cruel manners, such as by throwing living-beings into the burning fire, or raising heaps of human heads by the sides of rivers of flowing blood simply for the propagation of a faith are common events which helped the rise and progress of the semitic religions. Of all the religions that have arisen on this globe, the only one without exception which has accorded complete freedom of faith and expression and which has never boycotted or excluded a person from its fold simply for the fact of a difference of opinion, is the Hindu religion. Never can a single attempt be shown to have been made to deprive a non-believer of his life for his heresy. There was one Charwak in the historical period, a rationalist of extreme type. He preached that the Vedas were composed by very cunning people who were cheats, crooks and devils. Even such an opponent like Charwaka has been accorded a place of honour deserving a philosopher in

I. “त्रयो वेदस्यकर्तारो भण्डधूर्तनिशाचराः ।”

Charwaka Darshan.

(Sarva Darshana: By Madhawacharya).

the compilation of his Systems of Hindu philosophies by such a renowned and learned author like Madhavacharya. Does history of religion and philosophy of any other nation hold forth such a golden example of human tolerance? In this nation of free thought and faith, if millions of people from times immemorial have held dear and unflinching this singular faith in the Vedas, it must not be supposed, that all those who did it were individuals devoid of intelligence. A Western thinker like Dr. Muir approves what Lokamanya Tilak had said about the genius of these believers in the Vedic faith. He says, 'One, who reads the discussions of these writers cannot fail to be struck with the acuteness of their reasoning, the logical precision with which their arguments are presented, and the occasional liveliness and ingenuity of their illustrations.' (*The Arctic Home*, p. 449).

This supreme faith, it must not be supposed, arose out of blind belief or total ignorance. It is in this nation which accorded most charitably an honoured place to atheists agnostics, and iconoclasts like the Buddha, Mahabir, Chakradhar, and such extreme materialists like Charwaka labelling someone, as an incarnation and some other as a philosopher, that since ancient ages such sages and seers like Manu, Patanjali, Jaimini, Shabaraswami, Badarayan, Yajnyawalkya, the great Shankaracharya, Ramanuja, Madhva, Ballabha, Madhava, right up to the modern age, Maharshi Patvardhan, Lokamanya Tilak and Aravind Ghosh, appear from time to time. These towers of genius have in a tradition of thousands of years been upholding devoted faith in the Vedas, the greatness and significant influence of which cannot be doubted in the least.

In recent times, a controversy is afoot in the study of the Vedas whether it is one book or many. The Vedas, these Western scholars and their disciples suppose, have been composed in the order of Rig-Veda, Yajurveda, Samaveda, and Atharvaveda, one after the other. In the Rig-Veda itself which is comparatively older than the other Vedas, the first and the tenth Mandal are, in their view, of a more recent period, while the remaining Mandals belong to earlier. Contrary to this assumption of the modern students of Veda the age-long convic-

tion of the Bharatiya people is that the Veda is one. The Hindus believe that for certain special reasons the great sage Vyasa arranged the one Veda in four parts. The commentator of Shukla Yajurveda observes, 'The sage Vyasa divided the Veda which he had learnt from Brahma in four parts called, Rig, Yajur, Sama and Atharva, on the prompting and blessings of the Brahma himself as it was discovered that man was becoming dull to understand the whole Veda at a time. Veda Vyasa gave these four parts to his four disciples: Paila, Vaishampayana, Jaimini, and Sumantu.' * What this learned commentator has stated is not a baseless surmise. There are innumerable references and pointers to the circumstance which occasioned this division of the Vedas in four parts, Bhagwata Purana says: 'Vyasa arranged the Veda in four parts for the convenience and continuance of the institution of sacrifice.' * The common belief that the Vedas arose out of one 'OMKAR', also endorses the traditional faith that the Veda is one. It is only in recent times that the sequence and time of composition of this or that book of the Veda have been discussed and determined by the scholars. As a result, it has given rise to unjustified sense of superiority or subordination amongst the Vedic people themselves. There is no reason to reject the traditional conviction however that the Veda, which emerged out of one 'Omkar' is all one, and that Vyasa has only arranged the same in four books on some scientific basis to meet some special requirements. The strength of action inspired by the Rig-Veda, the power of will by Yajurveda, knowledge by Samaveda, and the devotion to the menial functions of life by Atharvaveda, all these four are so very essential for the happy pilgrimage of a human being through this world. If

I. "तत्रादौ ब्रह्म परंपरया प्राप्तं वेदं वेदव्यासो मन्दमतीन् मनुष्यान् विचित्रं तत्कृपया चतुर्धा व्यस्य ऋग्यजुःसामाथर्ववेद्यांश्चतुरो वेदान् पौलवैशम्पायनजैमिनि-सुमन्तुभ्यः क्रमादुपदिदेश ।"

II. चातुर्होत्रं कर्म शुद्धं प्रजानां वीक्ष्य वैदिकम् ।
व्यदधाद्यज्ञसंतत्यै वेदमेकं चतुर्विधम् ॥"

(श्रीमद्भागवतम्)

we take into consideration this aspect, then it will be agreed that the four books of the Vedas are one and inseparable. Even for those who desire to study the Vedas according to the modern methods of scholarship, it will be more profitable to approach them as one instead of as four. Dr. S. V. Ketkar, who studied the Vedas in the new fashion, and contributed a valuable compilation of history, after such study, has also arrived at the same conclusion on this issue. He says: 'In the study of the Vedas it is possible to understand the historical significance by disregarding the sequence of time assigned to the various Suktas (hymns), only on the assumption that the whole Veda is one. When it is decided not to look to the internal time and sequence of the four parts of the Veda itself, the uncertainty of time and age of Suktas does not crop up as an obstacle. What some Vedic research scholars maintain that the "Brahman" chapters were composed after the Vedic mantras were compiled in books, we do not accept. We say that the composition of the "Brahmans" and the compilation of the Vedic mantras in chapters and books, both these activities were not only contemporary but also complementary. The Taittiriya, Katha and some other texts are mixtures of the "mantras" and the "Brahmanas"; on the other hand, the Taittiriya Brahmana itself contains many mantras. When the necessity of arranging the mantras in books is correctly realised, it will also be understood why the texts of the mantras and Brahmanas were compiled side by side almost during the same period. It is just probable that many mantras are contemporary of the Brahmanas. It is not possible on the ground of language to prove that the "mantras" and the "Brahmana" tracts are not contemporary.'

(Maharashtriya Jnanakosh: By Dr. S. V. Ketkar, Part II, p. 200).

The Vedas are in our hands now in the form of four books which make people, who have no traditional systematic approach, believe them to be different and independent. But the texts of all the four books are mutually dependent and complementary. All the four texts are of indispensable utility

in the performance of a sacrifice. The mistake of supposing these four books as completely different and totally unconnected is the result of not understanding or even inquiring their separate functions and the necessity. It must be unquestionably admitted that all the four books of the Vedas have only one purpose, namely, the Vedic sacrifice for which they were composed. The Rig-Veda which is a collection of all the Suktas sung in the praise of Gods has been arranged and assigned to a particular priest in the performance of a sacrifice. The Yajurveda and the Samaveda are also similarly separately compiled and assigned to different but distinct priests incharge of exclusive or distinct parts in the sacrifice. All writings on the Vedas, the commentaries, the Smritis, and the Puranas have all along unanimously affirmed this purpose of the Vedas. It therefore logically follows that even those who propose to interpret the Vedas in the modern historic method cannot repudiate this traditionally established conviction and fact that the Vedas were originally, one mass of material, later on arranged in chapters and books for the facility of their use in the performance of a sacrifice. If it were not so, where was the necessity of picking up only certain mantras and putting them into a distinct text of Samaveda instead of marking these for recitals in a musical style. Those who have never witnessed a Vedic sacrifice and understood the distinct operations and rites making it altogether a whole one performance can never realize what blunder they commit in imagining that these complementary and supplementary texts are independent. Dr. Ketkar has very clearly pointed out the root cause of this failure of Western scholars and the modern Indian researchers, who follow their views, to be their total disregard of the institution of Vedic sacrifice in analysing or interpreting the texts of the four books. He says: 'Our Sanskrit writers have repeatedly demanded that for the correct grasp of the Vedic times, it is necessary to know the performance of a sacrifice, the institution, as a whole. Unfortunately, there is no attempt or even the desire on the part of scholars and students to first understand this institution of Vedic sacrifice, before they rush to the studies of Vedic literature.

The Western scholars have been a little taken aback by the literature on "Sacrifice". They could not understand, and were therefore irritated at certain functions and operations in the Vedic sacrifice which their reasoning could not digest or accept. Many of our own modern scholars who are the disciples of one Western school or the other, and who have ignored the study of the 'institution of sacrifice', which is a very complex subject at times defying intelligence failed to give any deep thought to it. The Brahmins created and nourished the 'institution of Vedic sacrifice'. It cannot be said that they did so merely to enhance their own prestige and privileges. The social contract, the forms and prescriptions of religion which were common to the whole society were beyond the power of the Brahmins to change. The 'institution of sacrifice' was common to all the three castes. If the Brahmins prompted by selfishness had endeavoured to bring about some changes in the form of worship or sacrifice the other castes would not have permitted them to do so, or tolerated it. If the Brahmins had added some factors to serve their selfish ends, their interference would not have been sympathetically supported by other castes. It is simply impossible to believe that the Brahmins had raised the institution of sacrifice merely to dupe the other castes. The facts rather point to the contrary circumstance. It is common knowledge that the hosts of the sacrifice were generally non-Brahmins. How could it be supposed that they were trapped by this priestly class and fell into the noose thrown by them? The Kshatriya class instead of opposing the 'institution of sacrifice' not only encouraged it but indulged into it in a spirit of rivalry amongst itself. To understand this peculiar institution of Vedic sacrifice correctly, we must approach it with an open mind, without any prejudiced notion like the Brahmins had created it for their self-aggrandisement and domination. Of the two aspects of Bharatiya history which have not been understood at all by the Western scholars on account of their total disregard of the story of evolution of this 'institution of sacrifice', the one is the evolution of the social system and the other is

the legend of the compilation of the Vedic texts in chapters and books.

(Maharashtriya Jnanakosh: By Ketkar, Part II, pp. 195-196).

The pure and simple reason why the original mass of Vedic mantras was rearranged in chapters and books was that the priests who presided over the performance of a sacrifice badly needed their own versions and reference material for use in its different stages and rites. The 'sacrifice' which had then attained the status of the most significant factor of the social life of the race, had become a subject of special attention and study of the priest class who endeavoured to maintain its purity. It was for this reason that the Vedas were arranged in the 'Samhita' form of chapters and books. Taking into consideration this basic and broad factor, it becomes inevitable for us who desire to have glimpses of the form of culture and the concept of nationhood in the Vedic times, to approach the Vedas as one single book of ancient literature.

We have already affirmed that the concept of nationhood and the character and form which that idea assumed in the long process of evolution can only be learnt from the most ancient literature of Hindus the Vedas. It is natural, therefore, that those who want to reconstruct their nation on its pristine foundations, must turn towards the Vedas. This vista of the nation's life, of which we get some glimpses in the Vedas, is not of very near or recent origin but goes so far back that today it has become a very difficult task to fix or ascertain its beginning. The essence and form of the life of the nation reflected in the words of the Vedas must have started taking its shape much before the compilation or even the original composition of the Vedic literature. It is therefore necessary first to ascertain the time of the composition or the revelation of the Vedic mantras. How far is it possible, or is it possible at all, to accomplish this task and say exactly when were the Vedas revealed or composed?

At no time in the past there seems to have been made any effort to fix the age of the Vedas. It is only in the modern period that scholars like Weber, Max Muller, Tilak, Winter-

nitz, Avinash Chandra Das, Pavagi, Aprabuddha and a bunch of some others of first rank have attempted to fix the age of the Vedas with the help of different sciences. But how far have these learned men succeeded in fixing it decisively is indeed a question.

As far as the Hindus are concerned, it is their age-old belief that the Vedas are without any beginning. They are supposed to be revealed prior to the creation or the evolution of the universe; or rather are the cause of it. It is next to futile in their eyes to attempt to fix their age. From the number of opinions already cited to prove the immensurable significance of the Vedas in the national life of Bharat, what these great thinkers think about this aspect of the Vedas is quite apparent. Once it is assumed that the Vedas are as constituent a cause of this universe, as the Almighty is, it is ridiculous to embark upon the task of fixing the beginning of the Vedas as it would be, to postulate the starting time of the solar-system, or of the first motion in the universe. The Vedas are a literature made up of letters, if some one says, and, therefore they must need a composer; or because the Vedas mention the names of Rishis, who must naturally be prior to the literature in which they are mentioned to be its authors. To all such objections, our ancient forefathers have given a set satisfactory reply. The Mahabharat says:

‘The Vedas along with the history which had been lost at the time of the great deluge were recovered by the Rishis after great penance and with the blessings of the Brahma.’ This belief of the recovery of the Vedas is not only witnessed by the scientific and philosophical writings but is equally upheld by literary authors also. Bhavabhuti, a renowned Vedic scholar, the author of Uttara Rama Charitra says:

युगांतेऽन्तर्हितान् वेदान् सेतिहासान् महर्षयः ।

लेभिरे तपसा पूर्वमनुज्ञाताः स्वयंभुवा ॥

(Maha Bharat, Shantiparva).

ब्रह्मर्षयो ब्रह्महिताय तप्त्वा परः सहस्राः शरदस्तपांसि ।

एनान्यपदेयन् गुरवः पुराणाः स्वान्येव तेजांसि तपोमयानि ॥

(Uttara Ramacharitra).

'The Brahman sages after the penance of thousands of years were blessed with this light of knowledge in the form of the Vedas for the good of the universe.'

Another traditional belief of the Bharatiyas was that the Vedas are without any beginning. The moderners have however made serious efforts to ascertain the age of the Vedas. It is very interesting to examine how far they have succeeded in it.

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Amongst the people who have succeeded in recent times in inspiring admiration and faith in the Vedic lore, Swami Dayanand Saraswati, the founder of the Arya Samaj, stands first and foremost with his unique and dominant personality. He exercised uncommon influence almost over the whole of North Bharat and especially in the Punjab in which province he revived absolute faith in the Vedas. Unfortunately this his achievement was not the result of conclusions arrived at on the grounds of research in history. Swami Dayanand accepts 1, 96, 08, 52, 976 years, as the age of the Vedas. He condemns all those who indulge in attempting to fix the time of the Vedas on historical evidence as irreligious and atheistic. Let us leave aside Swami Dayanand as a sentimental believer in the tradition; yet there are not few who have offered their surmises regarding the time of the Vedas. Just in the wake of the Western scholars, Bharatiyas also have continued the grand effort, and contributed their own theories regarding the Vedic age and life on the evidence of different sciences like Philology, Geology, History, Archeology, Ethnology, etc. Amongst these numerous research scholars, Dr. Weber gave his verdict that it is impossible to ascertain the Vedic age.

The first memorable attempt at fixing the time of the Vedas was made by Prof. Max Muller on the basis of Philology. In his opinion, the rise of Buddhism was a reaction and a revolt against Brahmanism. He holds the view that the Suktas, Brahmanas, Aranyakas, and the Upanishads, all of which are a part of the Vedas, must have been completed before Buddha, that is, about five centuries before Christ. He allots two hundred years for the composition of the literature

in each of the above classes. He argues that the Brahman literature pre-supposes the 'Samhita' (Vedic texts), which must have taken about eight to ten hundred years before Christ. That period according to him was the period of the arrangement of the Suktas (Vedic hymns), in the form of the 'Samhita'. But as it is found that the Suktas had definitely acquired a sanctity by that time, it is necessary to assign two hundred years more for their composition before they were arranged in the 'Samhita'. But all this theory of Max Muller allotting two hundred years for the composition of each group of Vedic literature is merely a fanciful hypothesis as the great scholar himself has observed, 'as an experiment', therefore, though as no more than an experiment, we propose to fix years 600 to 1,200 B.C. as the limits of that age.'

It is amusing to note that all this hypothetical supposition of Max Muller fixing 1,200 years B.C. for the composition of Vedic literature has been the result of the influence of the Biblical theory working upon his Christian mind. The Bible gives out 4,000 years B.C. as the age of the creation of the universe. Bound by the faith in the truth of the Biblical geography and theories, Max Muller could not imagine that anything could go beyond 4,000 years B.C. Goldstucker, a critic of Max Muller asks:

'But is 1,200 B.C. a primary age of the world, except in Biblical Geography?'

Max Muller has allotted 200 years for every group of Vedic literature in which he has divided it. This his grouping and the allotment of time for its composition is not at all scientific, but purely a fanciful hypothesis. Influenced by the weight of the great name of the Western Vedic scholar, all those who followed him were so enamoured by this his suggestion which he himself repeatedly called as merely tentative, misunderstood it as a scientific theory and presented it as an established fact. But there were, Dr. Whitney and Dr. Winternitz who criticised this baseless theory of Max Muller. How a pure fancy could get the recognition as a scientific theory without any research value or substantial evidence is well illustrated by this widely circulated belief that Max Muller has deter-

mined the age of the Vedas. Dr. S. V. Ketkar observes, 'It is very astonishing that scholars should have forgotten the fact that the so-called "Scientific theory of the Vedic times" which has been so long adopted was formulated on very hollow and unscientific basis.'

(Maharashtriya Jnanakosh, Part II, p. 187).

The hypothesis of Max Muller that a language takes' 200 years for a change is baseless. The theories regarding the periods required for changes in the styles and forms of Sanskrit are self-contradictory. Max Muller assigns 200 years for each change. But Dr. How requires 500 years. He assigns the Vedas to a period between 2,400 to 2,000 years B.C. according to this his calculation. What is the determinant to fix this period? Whether 200, 500, or a 1000 years, would be necessary for such a transformation seems to depend purely upon the personal views and the sweep of imagination of every author. If Max Muller gives 200 years, Dr. Winternitz, who criticises him, demands 1000 years for such a change. Winternitz criticises Tilak also who has endeavoured to fix the age of the Vedas on the strength of sound astronomical calculations. He says, 'If the Vedas are supposed to belong to a period far remote, then the only link between them and the highly refined Sanskrit literature of later times, the Brahmanas is neither adequate nor sufficient.' It is, however, to be noted what these scholars from Winternitz to Max Muller suppose, that the language of the Rig-Vedic mantras is identical with the language in common routine use of the people which becomes the subject of change according to time and territory, is a grand fallacy. It is true that language varies according to regions and ages. Yet the truth is confined only to the language of common mundane use; and it will be totally wrong in regard to scientific and sacred literature like the Vedas. The history of the last 2500 years of Sanskrit language which has been the common vehicle of science and literature has not shown any significant material change in its form or character. This fact should disprove the theory of the Western scholars. On the other hand, it will be readily

accepted that the language and diction of two contemporary authors also differ widely. It is hazardous, therefore, to rush to any conclusions regarding age merely on the evidence of Philology which may create strange contradictions. Language is not a conclusive or a faultless evidence of age.

Shri V. K. Rajwade has established that the language of Rig-Veda is a refined one and rigidly governed by its grammar.*

(*Translation of Nirukta in Marathi*: By V. K. Rajwade).

Such a language being itself regular by the rules of grammar, and consecrated further by the incontrovertible character of the sacred mantras makes it almost unchangable. It is, therefore, impossible to come to any conclusion regarding the Vedic age with the help of language alone.

The Western scholars have so great a faith in the science of Philology that they do not merely resort to it for the fixing of the Vedic age but also depend upon it for more serious theories of the mixtures of races, their lives, their conflicts and their conquests. Now, however, they have come to recognise that Philology is not a very certain evidence to rely upon. Dr. Keith observes in this regard: 'All the Indo-European languages have certain special points in which they agree with one or another of the group and to deduce racial mixtures and migrations from these facts is quite impossible.'

What is true about the science of Philology is also true about Geology and History. What evidence is there to suggest, to confirm, or contradict, whether the great deluge of the Ice-age took place 10,000 years back or 80,000 years back? The Geologists who offer both these theories are equally honest. If Tilak asserts on the strength of Geology 10000 years as the age of Vedic Civilization in his *Arctic-Home*, there will be some other research scholar who may equally honestly put forth the theory that the civilization belonged to a period of 70000 years before what Tilak surmises. There is no palpable reason in the science of Geology to preclude the acceptance of the other theory. At the most, what can be said against it is that the supposition does not suit one's views.

Tilak says, 'But according to some geologists, 20,000 or

even 80,000 years have passed since the close of the last Glacial epoch; and as the oldest date assigned to the Vedic hymns does not go beyond 4,500 B.C., it may be contended that the traditions of the Ice-Age or of the Inter-Glacial home, cannot be supposed to have been accurately preserved by oral transmission for thousands of years that elapsed between the commencement of the post-Glacial era and the oldest date of the Vedic hymns. It is, therefore, necessary to examine the point a little more closely in this place. In my *Orion* or *Researches into the Antiquity of the Vedas*, I have shown that while the Taittiriya Samhita and the Brahmanas begin the Nakshatras with the Krittikas or the Pleiades showing that the vernal equinox then coincided with the afore-said asterism (2,500 B.C.). The Vedic literature contains traces of Mriga or Orion being once the first of the Nakshatras and the hymns of the Rig-Veda, or at least many of them which are undoubtedly older than the Taittiriya Samhita, contain reference to this period, that is, about 4,500 B.C. approximately. It is also pointed out that there are faint traces of the same equinox being once in the constellation of Punarvasu, presided over by Aditi, which was possible in about 6,000 B.C. I have in my later researches tried to push back this limit by searching for the older zodiacal positions of the vernal equinox in the Vedic literature, but I have not found any evidence of the same. It will be seen that this estimate well agrees with the conclusions of American geologists, who from an examination of the erosion of the valleys and similar other well-ascertained facts, assign to the close of the last Glacial epoch a date not older than about 8,000 B.C. We might even go further and say that ancient Vedic chronology and calendar furnish an independent corroboration of the moderate view of the American geologists, and when two independent lines of research unexpectedly lead us to the same result, we may very well reject, at least in the present state of our knowledge, the extravagant speculations of Croll and his followers and adopt the view that the last Glacial epoch closed and the post-Glacial period commenced at about 8,000 B.C.'

(*The Arctic Home in the Vedas*, p. 419).

Thus it will be seen that the very reason of moderation in the science of research for which the opinion of American scientists Tilak accepts, is in another sense an admission that geology and geo-physics cannot of their own strength become the bases of ascertaining the Vedic age. It is not possible to dislodge the view of Dr. Croll which was endorsed by scientists like Sir Robert Paul, Prof. Geikie and others by calling it a fanciful speculation. That view was based upon sound mathematical calculations. If simply because there is difference of thousands of years, it is to be discarded as a speculation, then there should be no objection if a scholar like Max Muller runs down the view of the American scientists as wild imagination with the vehemence of Tilak. The American geologist's theory is taken as a corroboration by Tilak because that is the nearest to the age fixed by him on his astronomical calculations. Assuming that some other astronomer disproves tomorrow the theory propounded by Tilak in the *Orion* by calling it incomplete and takes the Vedas to an age more remote by thousands of years, then the American view will fall flat. In that case Dr. Croll's theory would have to be accepted on the same logical grounds, to which Tilak himself cannot object.

Sri S. G. Dikshit, as astronomer genius of this century, has examined the theories of Tilak as propounded by him in his *Orion*. He says: 'In the Vedic times, the months were Lunar. The beginning of the year was apparently calculated according to the Lunar months. From the expression: "Uttarayoh Falgunyoh Ādadhita"—we gather that "Purva Falguni" was the last "Nakshatra" of the Lunar month.' Commenting upon this statement Shri Ogle, the translator of *Orion* observes, 'if the starting of the year is taken to be on the Purnima day on which the Moon is in "Uttara Falguni", then the Sun would naturally be near "Uttara Bhadrpada".' If this starting of the year is coincidental with the beginning of the Vasant, then the 'vernal equinox' naturally falls in the 'Uttara Bhadrpada', which means almost the same conditions that prevail today, or at about 21,000 years back. Now if this theory is mathematically plausible, then naturally 21,000 years have to be assigned for the Taittiriya Samhita, and it

would not be logical to deny that period to the 'Samhita', merely for the reason that it seems to be too remote. If some one holds this view and tries to support it by geological conclusions of Dr. Croll, how does it lie in the mouth of anyone to dismiss them as a fanciful speculation! Let there be no misunderstanding that we are opposed to the North Polar theory of Tilak. While admitting in substance the polar theory of Tilak, it is our opinion that geology is not in itself a complete and self-sufficient science offering convincing evidence for the fixing of the Vedic age.

Some people go to the length of affirming that the North Pole itself was at some time located in India. Shri Abinash Chandra Das has, however, shown how such conclusions drawn from this theory are liable to be wrong and uncertain. Das himself has in the first edition of his book pleaded that 60,000 years back the modern Rajasthan was all covered by sea. But in his second edition, Das brings down that period from 60,000 to 27,000 years. That clearly indicates how this science is incomplete and unreliable.

What we have said about geology applies equally to the so-called historical method of determining the age on the basis of calculations of dynastic generations as given in Puranas. Dr. Ketkar has attempted to build up some theories on the evidence of the dynastic generation as mentioned in the Puranas. Fixing the 'Dashrajna Yuddha' (War of Ten Kings), as a crucial event of Vedic age, he tries to resolve the Rig-Vedic problems. But even Dr. Ketkar seems to be a little wrong in overvaluing the dynastic enumerations of the Puranas which are not as exact and systematic as they are expected to be in historical treatises. The Vedas mention 'Shantanu' and 'Devapi', but from the reference it is not possible to assert if these two as mentioned in the place were brothers. There is a reference to 'Janamejay' in the Veda. But there also it is not clear if that 'Janamejay' was the great grand-son of 'Arjuna', and not his ancestor. There is the king 'Sudas' mentioned in the Vedas. Who was he? Was he a descendant of Rama, or his ancestor? What is there to show exactly his relation with Rama? Moreover, Sudas is referred to in the Rig-Veda not merely as

a proper name, but also as a qualitative pronoun. To infer one thing or the other is really confounding. Nevertheless, the dynastic records are certainly helpful in corroborating the age of the Vedas if that could be determined by other independent evidence.

Of all the different types of evidences Tilak holds the astronomical one as the most reliable. On the strength of the astronomical calculations he builds his theory of the Vedic age. On later thought of the great deluge in the inter-glacial period, he brings back this age further by 2,000 years. There is no doubt that the movements and positions of the stars, planets and the constellations in the sky being more regular and being always governed by certain rules, the times fixed by astronomical calculations would be more exact and reliable. On that account this method is certainly nearer to truth and should be acceptable to all. But even this method has not offered irrepudiable conclusions. It will be amusing to see how like geology, this astronomical method has also given alternative periods which are removed from each other by thousands of years.

This astronomical method was employed for the determination of age of the Vedas first time by Tilak, for which he deserved and won unanimous regard from the Vedic scholars. The substance of Tilak's argument is as follows:—

'In the Vedic age, time was measured by the phases of the Moon, the change of the seasons, and the movements of the Sun to the north and south. The sacrificial periods were adjusted in accordance with the movements and positions of the Sun. The closing ceremony of a sacrifice was adjusted to coincide with the end of the year.

'For that reason, in the Vedic terminology, the three words, "Satra", "Yadnya" and "Samvatsara" are synonymous. The difference between the Lunar and Solar years was adjusted by adding an extra month ever since or even before the Rig-Vedic times. In that age the year was Lunar. But the cycle of the seasons depends upon the Sun. To reconcile the difference caused by this phenomenon, it became necessary to adjust the beginning of the year after about every 2000 years. If we

now ask, when did the Vedic year begin, we shall find that the beginning of the year was calculated from the Vernal Equinox Day. But later on, it changed to the Makara-Sankrama-day. Enquiring further, we find from four statements in the Taittiriya "Samhita" and the "Brahman" that during that period, the vernal equinox coincided with the Krittikas. If then the constellation of the Krittikas is considered to be the starting of the year, the Taittiriya "Samhita" has to be assigned to 2,350 years B.C. If the beginning of the "Udagayan" coincides with "Falgun", then the vernal equinox must come in "Mrigasheersh", two mansions ahead of the Krittikas. The other name for the constellation of "Mrigasheersh" is "Agrahayani". Agrahayani is the mouth, i.e., beginning of the Nakshatras in the Vedic sequence. In the "Taittiriya Samhita and Brahman", it is said that the "Falguni Purnamas" was the mouth of the year. If this statement is taken to mean that, that was the end of "Uttarayan" and if the Agrahayan which means the "Mrigasheersh" is understood to start the year, then it has to be inferred, that the vernal equinox, coincided with this Nakshatra at one time. This conclusion is also supported by the time allotted for the "Pitru-Paksha". (The fortnight fixed to worship the manes and offer them annual obligations.)

In the first mandal of Rig-Veda, there is a hymn which says that, a "Dog awoke the Ribhus at the close of the year." The Dog referred to in the above verse means the Dog-star in the constellation of Orion. This very clearly suggests that when the Sun came near this star, the season of Spring awoke from slumber and commenced the new year. That unmistakably confirms the theory that the vernal equinox coincided with the Sun coming near the Dog-star in the constellation of Orion. Naturally, the beginning of Uttarayan started with the full-moon of Falgun, and the "Mrigasheersh" was the mouth or the beginning of the cycle of Nakshatras. The fact stated in Taittiriya Samhita and Brahman that the vernal equinox occurred in the Mrig constellation, gets irrefutable corroboration from the above reference of Rig-Veda.

There is another similar reference in the hymn known as "Vrishakapi". The meaning of "Vrishakapi" is allegorical to

suggest the condition of the Sun during the winter-equinox, in the age when the vernal equinox coincided with the Mrigashersha. This Sukta not only refers to the Orion and the Dog-star, but also describes very lucidly the position of the Sun beginning to move to the north or south of the Vishuva Vritta—meridian. Reading the story of the “seasons” along with this description, we get a connected and complete thesis regarding the age when these facts and phenomena were observed and recorded in allegories.

In the Taittiriya Samhita, there is another clear statement that, in a certain age, the year commenced with the Chitra Purnima. If the movement of the Sun towards the south starts on the Falguni Purnima, the vernal equinox must commence in the Mrigashersha (the fifth lunar mansion), similarly if the movement of the Sun towards the south started on the Chitra Purnima, then the vernal equinox must coincide with the “Punarvasu” (the seventh Lunar mansion). This must have happened in very remote age, traces of which conditions are found in the ancient sacrificial literature. “Aditi” is the presiding deity of the mansion or “Punarvasu”. It is stated that once the “Yajna”, sacrifice, abandoned the Gods. After that it was Aditi who re-started the Yajna. The plausible interpretation of this anecdote is that formerly in those days, the “Yajnas” were performed without any reference or rules about times and seasons. But since then, it was decided that the “cycle of the sacrifice” should be started with the “Aditi”. This means that Aditi became the presiding deity of “Yajna” or in other words, she became the starting point of the year. Aditi was supposed to be permanently associated with the vernal equinox. The Sun started his pilgrimage to the south from this point of Aditi, in the mansion of Punarvasu. That shows how the memory of the vernal equinox falling in Punarvasu persisted even in the days of Taittiriya in the form of the little expression. The year and the Yajna started with Punarvasu at the same time before the age of Orion.

We have so far discussed three ancient periods. The first is the Aditi-age, which was pre-Orion, about in between six to four thousand years B.C. The compilation of Rig-Veda

was not completed then. The memory of this pre-historic period rests only with the Hindus in the whole of the human race. The second age, is that of Orion which covered a period of 4,000 to 2,500 years B.C. It was during this period that a large number of Vedic hymns and many other Vedic writings were composed. The third is the Krittika age. This covered a period in between 2,500 to 1,400 years B.C. This is the age in which the Taittiriya Samhita and the Brahmanas were composed. This is also the age in which the Rig-Vedic hymns generally became un-understandable.'

It was after he wrote 'Orion' and fixed the age of the Vedas that Tilak discovered some other evidences in the Vedic literature which suggested to him the possibility of discovering the 'Home of the Vedic Aryans in the Arctic regions'. On some independent evidence provided by the geological discoveries, it became plausible to assert that the 'Arctic region' was inhabitable before the Ice-age. This prevailed upon Tilak to take backward the Vedic age by 2,000 years, and emphatically advocate a definite conclusion that by no means, or for no reasons could it be brought this side of 8,000 years B.C.

The theory of the 'Arctic Home of the Vedic Aryans' propounded by Tilak has now been universally accepted; but the age determined by him is not yet conclusive. His astronomical calculations have given rise to alternative propositions regarding the Vedic Age. When we see astronomical calculations pointing to alternative ages removed from each other by thousands of years, there seems to be some patent fallacy in the arguments of the Vedic scholars depending on such evidence, when they accuse those who base their theories on geological discoveries. It is interesting to look into how both sciences provide sound evidence to determine the times of the Vedas.

CHAPTER III

THE AGE OF THE VEDAS

WE have reviewed the valuable contribution of Tilak in resolving the difficult problem of fixing the age of the Vedas. Professor Hermann Jacobi, a contemporary of Tilak has also arrived at almost the same conclusion about the Vedic age on the ground of his independent astronomical calculations based on different considerations and data than those relied upon by Tilak. He takes his stand on the statement: 'Aghasu hanyante gavah'.¹ (The bulls are killed in Magha constellation) and calculates that the rainy season in the days when the above statement was made must be starting with the Magha constellation when the Sun was in the North point. Jacobi also refers to the prescription in the 'Grihya Sutras' commending the pointing out of the North Pole to the newly-wedded couples. He argues that these two expressions help very definitely to fix the age of the Vedas. He says that the Sutra literature must have been composed at a time when the last star in the Dhruva-constellation was visible. This star became invisible thereafter and it is only for about 1,200 years, that it has again taken its place in the constellation. The time when that star could have been in the Dhruva-constellation was about 3,000 years B.C., and that is the time of the composition of the above Sutra.

Another contemporary and friend of Tilak Shri Dikshit has discovered in the Shatapatha Brahman a very strong piece of evidence in support of the theory of Tilak in the statement,² 'These do not desert the eastern direction.' This referred to the constellation of the Kritikas (Plaidis). Shri Dikshit is

¹ "अघासु हन्यन्ते गावः"

² "एता ह वै प्राच्ये दिशो न च्यवन्ते ।"

acclaimed to be a unique genius of all-India fame in the astronomical science. He has given us an immemorable volume in the field of Indian Astronomy which has indeed been regarded to be an unsurpassable monumental work of its kind. Shri Dikshit has proved beyond doubt from the above statement that the Vernal Equinox during that period coincided with the Krittikas. This discovery helped the general theory of Tilak; but at the same time it has also shown some inaccuracies of details worked out by him. Dikshit accepts the general theory of Tilak but does not agree with the proofs or the arguments put forward by him in support of his theory. He observes: 'It can be independently established that in the age of the Rig-Veda Samhita, the Vernal Equinox coincided with the Mriga-Orion. That does not require any support of the hypothesis or the interpretation that the "Udagayan" started with the Falguna. There is according to him a difficulty in so interpreting the "Anuvak" (portion of the mantra). For there is no indication to suggest that the year beginning was calculated with the "Udagayan". On the other hand, there are clear proofs to affirm that the year began with the Mrigasheersha.' Though he thus shakes the arguments and grounds of Tilak, he endorses his theory on different evidences.

Another reputed astronomer Shri V. B. Ketkar also supports the theory of Tilak but on yet different grounds in a different manner. He relies on the statement: 'Brihaspati who arose first, did so with the constellation Tishya.' (Taittiriya Brahman--311).¹ That means, Brihaspati-Guru came in conjunction with Tishya. Brihaspati-Guru was indeed passing by Tishya even before; but his 'Shara' was pointing to the South whereas that of Tishya or Pushya was to the North with the result that there was no conjunction and co-travel. But the miracle happened and when the sages of the period of Taittiriya Brahman observed this phenomenon they were surprised and the event was recorded. With his conjecture and calculations

¹“ बृहस्पतिः प्रथमं जायमानः तिष्यं
नक्षत्रमभिसंबभूव ”

supported by the opinions of the French astronomer Liveriar in regard to the movement of Guru, Ketkar has established that the conjunction of Brihaspati-Guru and Tishya referred to in the Taittiriya must have taken place 4,650 years before Christ. That naturally leads to the conclusion that the Rig-Veda must be assigned to a period 6,000 years B.C. Ketkar observes: 'What Tilak required a whole book to affirm and prove, is thus established by a simple single mathematical calculation about the conjunction of Guru and Tishya recorded in the above Brahman.' Nevertheless, there is one slight error in that, Ketkar gave all his attention to the conjunction of Guru and Tishya, but has not taken into consideration the verb 'Sambabhuva'—which really refers to the past. It has therefore to be said that the reference to the conjunction is not to an event happening before the eyes of the observers, but to their knowledge or memory of the event having taken place at some time in the past.

Shri B. R. Kulkarni, a critic of Tilak's theories, has raised the following objections on the arguments in the *Orion*. He says: 'Tilak could not show and rely upon any other evidence except the one in the 'Vrishakapi Sukta'. But this hymn is after all an allegory and therefore its astronomical interpretation need not be accepted by all. Of the other proofs, the main, viz., 'Agrahayan' does not belong to the Vedas proper. Tilak rather relies upon this evidence so much as to suggest that it is the heritage of a memory of the past cohabitation of the Hindus and the Greeks. The third argument which he has placed first in his great work stands on two expressions, viz., 'Vasant is the mouth of the seasons'; and the 'Krittikas are the mouth of the mansions' which appear in the Taittiriya Brahman.¹ Shri Kulkarni has endeavoured to show by a number of references from the Vedas, the astronomical conditions of a period as far as 26,000 to 16,000 years. But when it comes to the point of determining the age of composition of the

¹ "ऋतूनां मुखं यद्वसंतः

कृत्तिका मुखं नक्षत्राणाम् "

Vedic text he accepts Tilak's theory and places the Vedas in about 3000 B.C.

Shri Aprabuddha, another talented critic of Tilak, has examined his theories at length. In his view, 'The "Vrishakapi" Sukta, on which Tilak has depended so much, cannot, however, be interpreted, as he has done'. He says: 'There are in my opinion some objections in the matter of reconciling the beginning of the year with the 'Udagayan'. The Taittiriya Samhita mentions three beginnings for the cycle of yearly sacrifices. That means that there was no compulsion or emphasis on the start of the sacrifice with the beginning of the year as Tilak holds. At any rate in the days of this Samhita, such a course was not very much insisted upon. If the sacrifice could be commenced at any time during the three months, it cannot be said that the year began with the sacrifice. Nor if the equinox coincided with the 'Mriga'—Orion, as is supposed to be suggested from the interpretation of the 'Vrishakapi Sukta', then the necessary conclusion must be that the hymn was composed in some region below the North Pole. While commenting on this hymn what Tilak has suggested about the constellation of 'Mula' in the evenings of winter equinox and the Hunter-star, otherwise known as the 'Pakvana' of the Greek mythology, is not at all probable in the region directly under the North Pole. Far from this point a portion of the equator cannot be at all visible. In this region, a month and half before the sunrise and after, there is clear light in which the Dog-star cannot be visible at all. How could then it be supposed that the Hunter-star or the Dog-star which has been invisible a month and half before the actual sunrise to wake up the Sun? The Hunter or the Dog-star becomes visible in the evening before the Sun passes through the constellation of Mrig. It is sustainable to imagine that a star which has disappeared in the evening can be said to have gone to wake up the Sun? Really speaking, to make this imagination real, the Dog-star should rise on the horizon a little before the rise of the Sun. It is natural to fancy that birds wake up the Sun, but it would be too unpoetic to say

that the birds which retired to their nests in the evening, have gone to wake up the Sun!

What pre-suppositions Tilak had to take for granted to support his thesis, it is interesting to know and hence we note them here:

- (1) In the days of the 'Taittiriya Samhita' the real meaning of 'Vishuvan' was forgotten; but it was known in the period of the Orion;
- (2) 'Ribhu' to mean the Ritudev, chief of the season, is a Western supposition. In the Rig-Veda as such, 'The Ribhus were a set of human beings who had attained God-hood by the prowess of their penance;' ¹
- (3) It is pre-supposed that the twelve days of the period of rest or sleep of the 'Ribhus' are necessary for the adjustment of the difference between the Lunar and Solar year. That was to account for the shortage of twelve days according to the Lunar calculation;
- (4) The 'Sharad' Ritu (Winter-beginning) is as enchanting as the 'spring'. In face of the pleasant descriptions of the nights in the Rig-Veda, winter is said to be stormy and frightful;
- (5) The word 'Vishva' has never been used in Rig-Veda in the sense of 'cosmos', but always in the sense of 'All'. Tilak has supposed the word to mean the 'world';
- (6) It is assumed that in the age of the Rig-Veda the Luni-Solar adjustment was not arrived at;
- (7) The statement, 'this at the end of the year' ² though very clear, has been wrongly interpreted to mean at the beginning of the new year;
- (8) The references to the sleep or rest of the Ribhus which appear in two places are by different sages. The two hymns belong to distinct Rishis. In both the places the references are clearly to a past event as definite as the references in them to the miracles

¹“ तेन देवत्वं ऋभवः समानश ”

²“ संवत्सरे इदमथ । ”

of amputating the leg of 'Vishpala', by 'Ashavins' or the rescuing of 'Bhujyu' from the sea. The references are not to the present or the current events which are common from day-to-day. Yet Tilak suggests that the sleep of the Ribhus is in continuous sense;

- (9) Rig-Veda says: 'during these twelve days fields became ripe; water flooded into places which were dry, and herbs grew up.' (Rig. 4.33.7).¹ In face of this categorical statement, the description which should suggest the spring time, the twelve days are alluded to belong to 'Shishir' (Magh Falguna), season by Tilak.
- (10) In the 'Vrishakapi Sukta' 'the Sun in the equinox' is supposed to be the 'Vrishakapi';
- (11) The occasion of the return of 'Vrishakapi' to his home is also supposed to be in the latter portion of the Uttarayan (Summer Solistice);
- (12) In the 'Dakshinayan' (winter solistice), the 'Orion' appears on the horizon just at the time of the Sun-set. The Vrishakapi allegory is supposed to be based upon this astronomical phenomenon of the times. But it cannot be understood how when the Sun has already gone to his home in the 'Dakshinayan', this allegory of the Orion can be complete;
- (13) In the beginning of 'Uttarayan', the Orion disappears; and before that it rises in the night. It is, therefore, not very realistic to say that the Orion is a friend of the Sun. It has only to be imagined and supposed;
- (14) The expression 'Turiyena Brahmanā',² has been interpreted to mean 'with the help of the Turiya Mantra'. 'Turiya' in fact means the fourth or the last. It is a proper noun. The Brahma means 'Mantra' which interpretation would surpass even the stretch of imagination of European scholars. We get many such

¹“ सुक्षेत्राकृष्वन्नयन्त सिन्धून्धन्वा
तिष्ठन्नोषधिर्निम्नमापः ”

²“ तुरीयेण ब्रह्मणा ”

astounding revelations in this small thesis. If so many things have to be pre-supposed, then it is not difficult to fabricate any allegory. In the first mandal of the Rig-Veda, there is a hymn No. 123 which means 'the grand chariot of Usha is yoked and ready and there is a galaxy of brilliant stars shining round it.'¹ In this hymn, if this chariot is taken to mean, what is called the 'Rohinishakat' (the chariot of Rohini), then it can be very easily proved that the equinox on the North Pole must coincide with 'Ashlesha', as the Sun would rise in that constellation after two months. This method may help to arrive at a desired conclusion, but on the whole, it is not a commendable one. In conclusion, there is no satisfactory ground to infer the occurrence of the vernal equinox in Mrigasheersha from this hymn.

(Message of Rigved).

Shri Aprabuddha after thus showing that the argument of Tilak cannot stand the test of logic, has put forth his own criterion for the determination of the Vedic age. He has successfully answered a number of subtle doubts, and has shown that the mention of the Krittikas in the Shatapatha Brahman proves the equinox and that also when the constellation of the Krittikas enters the Vishuva, in other words, the actual equinox occurred in the beginning of the present-day Rohini-star. The age of Shatapatha according to him is about 3,000 years B.C. He argues that the mention of the name of Parikshitas in the Brihadaranyaka is not of ancestors of the Pandavas, but of their descendants. That naturally brings the Vajasaneyi Samhita to about 3,000 years B.C. and the age of Rig-Veda to 4,000 years B.C. Shri Aprabuddha offers a strong criticism of Tilak's arguments, though he arrives at the same conclusions regarding the age of Rig-Veda. There is of course, a slight difference in the meanings of the term, 'the age of Rig-Veda' as understood by both.

१“ पृथुरथो दक्षिणायाः अयोजि माः एनं
देवासा अमृतासा मास्युः । ”

Aprabuddha states this difference as follows:— 'In no case can the age of Rig-Veda be brought down this side of 4,000 years B.C. Even according to Tilak that is the age of the Rig-Veda, but his thesis is slightly different. He holds that the Rig-Vedic civilisation must have existed since an indefinite remote age but its literature cannot be more ancient than 4,000 years B.C. This Vedic literature specifically means the composition of the Rig-Veda which must have taken shape during the period between 4,000 to 25,000 years B.C. Tilak has indeed very satisfactorily shown the references to the North Pole in the Vedas. In his opinion, the hypothesis that a nomadic people carried the memories of the North Pole in their breasts for over a period of 4,000 to 5,000 years before recording them in the form of poetry is so absurd as does not deserve any consideration or refutation.' The difference between the two scholars is, therefore, that whereas Tilak holds the Vedic civilisation to belong to a much ancient period though in his opinion its literature cannot be earlier than 6,000 to 4,000 years; Aprabuddha argues that even the compilation of Vedic literature cannot be brought down in any case to this side of 4,000 years B.C. The conclusion, therefore, is that though all the critics of Tilak have raised objections against his arguments, yet they have directly or indirectly accepted his conclusions regarding the age of the Vedas.

If, however, we look further into the wide jumps taken by other scholars in the field of Vedic age on the strength of this astronomical science, it will become apparent that very much like the geological science, astronomy is also as much confounding if not equally helpless in solving this problem of the age of the Rig-Veda. Amongst the present-day research scholars except Dr. R. Shamshastri, all have taken very long and high jumps beyond the time determined by Tilak. It will be interesting to note some of the astounding theories put forth by the post-Tilak scholars.

Pandit Patankar alias 'Maharashtriya' has suggested that the month Mrigasheersha must have been called 'Agrahayan' before the full-moon of the month came to be called 'Agrahayani'. The event which fixed this name for the month as the start

of the year must have occurred according to time, when the North Pole was in the Orion, that is, as much ago as one full cycle of the 'Sampat movement'. He determines the age of the Vedas as 21,000 years B.C. This scholar has, however, taken for granted very strange beliefs regarding the Geological changes and the seasonal conditions on so flimsy ground of references in such an unreliable and loose piece of literature like the 'Harivamsh' for such a scientific purpose.

One Shri Lele and another Pandit Sudhakar Dwivedi have pushed the age further backwards by 40,000 and 54,000 years B.C., respectively.

Pandit Krishna Shastri Godbole relying upon astronomical grounds assigns the Vedas to a period of 18,000 years B.C. Adopting the same method and similar arguments which Tilak employs to prove his theory of Vasant-Sampat, this scholar works upon the theory of Sharat-Sampat and determines the age of Vedas as 12,000 years earlier than what Tilak propounds.

Pandit Dina Nath Shastri Chulet is, of course, the one scholar, who has assigned as ancient a period to the Vedas as could be imagined. He fixes the Rig-Vedic age as 1,50,000 years B.C. The arguments which he relies upon have, of course, now turned against him. Depending upon an article of Abinash Chandra Das, he assumes 60,000 years as the requisite period for the change in the geological conditions of Bharat. Shri Das himself has, however, narrowed down this period from 60,000 to 20,000 years; and it is funny to see that the whole structure of Pandit Chulet crashed down. Pandit Chulet has in one stroke disposed off, the theory of the 'Arctic Home' of Tilak and that of the 'Aryan Empire' of Pavgi by suggesting that all the miracles which have been described to take place in the *Arctic Home* by Tilak could surely have been witnessed in ancient times in Kashmir.

Shri Kulkarni has rightly criticised Pandit Chulet as follows:—

'Shri Chulet indulges in assuming too many pre-suppositions. For instance, he says, that the vernal equinox was once in the constellation named 'Bharat' that is whence and how this country received that name. If you ask now on what ground

Shri Chulet formulates this theory—his answer which is more absurd than the theory is that little expression in Gita, “I am ‘Shashi’ amongst constellations.” This “Shashi” according to Chulet is not, as all generally understand, the “moon”, but the sixth grade starlet known as “Shashak” which is situated in the constellation of “Bharat”. Chulet argues that the equinox must be sometime near the star to entitle it to be called the “Vibhuti”, representation of the “Almighty”. This means according to him that the Mahabharat which contains the above reference must have been composed at the time when the equinox was in “Shashak” or the “Mrigasheersh”. Naturally the Vedas must belong to a far remote period. If the argument looks plausible, it is really funny to see it crumble on the fact that the so-called name of the star “Shashak” was given only in this century and was never known in the Mahabharat times. These star-names like Shashak, Bharat, etc., were coined by Shri Jambhekar Shastri, very recently to make the English names understandable in Marathi. They are not traditional ancient names of the stars. The stars have been named after some individuals and famous personalities from the Mahabharat and the Puranas. Knowing this well or not when someone tries to put meanings on them and use them to determine the age of the Vedas, the attempt is not only absurd, but without a parallel in the history of research scholarship.’

Shri Kulkarni who finds, very rightly, the fallacies in Chulet’s theory has indulged himself in similar speculations. Taking a statement, ‘The difference between the Chitra and Swati’,¹ which appears in the Shulba Sutra, Kulkarni calculates the period of 15,000 years for the event. Further, he offers his guesswork on the ground of the possibility of ‘Punarvasu’, ‘Jalash’, ‘Bheshaj’, ‘Rudra’, and ‘Brahma alias Abhijit’, being in the place of ‘Dhruva’ that the Rig-Veda contains references to astronomical events which occurred some 18,000, 19,000 and 20,000 years before. It is doubtful, how much genuine the

¹ “चित्रास्वात्योर्यदन्तरं”

verse containing the astronomical statement in the Shulba Sutra which Kulkarni relies upon, is, and therefore useful for the purpose of ascertainment of the Vedic period. Kulkarni himself appears to have entertained the doubt. All other arguments of his, are equally unsubstantial. For instance, in the simple expression 'Brahma is the highest sphere of speech', Kulkarni interprets the word 'Param' as the highest point in the sky, and 'Brahma', the 'Abhijit' star. On this far-fetched interpretation he pleads that the Brahma that is Abhijit was in the polar place. But all this is baseless. The meaning of the verse is simple, viz., 'Brahma is the highest sphere of speech' and this is in accordance with the philosophical concept in the Rig-Veda in regard to the highest speech. The reference under examination is a reply to a question. The question was, 'I ask you, what is the end of this earth—the land's end. Tell me, what is the centre of this universe. What is the essence of a bull and a horse? And what is the highest abode of the speech?'¹

The answers to this series of questions were, 'Altar is the end of the earth; this sacrifice is the centre of the universe; this soma-juice is the essence of a bull and a horse; and Brahma is the highest abode of speech.'²

From these questions and answers, it will be apparent that the interpretation of Kulkarni is totally fantastic. It was to impress and emphasise the significance and power of the 'institution of sacrifice' in the Vedic age that the above answers were given and in that sense only can be very fittingly interpreted.

¹ "पृच्छामि त्वां परमन्तं पृथिव्याः
 पृच्छामि यत्र भुवनस्य नाभिः ।
 पृच्छामि त्वा वृष्णो अश्वस्य रेतः
 पृच्छामि वाचः परमं व्योम ॥

² इयं वेदिः परो अन्तो पृथिव्याः
 अयं यज्ञो भुवनस्य नाभिः ।
 अयं सोमो वृष्णो अश्वस्य रेतो
 ब्रह्मायं वाचः परमं व्योम ॥

The other reference which Kulkarni relies upon, is a verse from the Yajurveda. The astronomical interpretations which he tries to impose upon this is unwarranted. His argument discarding the meaning put upon this verse by Shri Shridhar Shastri Pathak is not correct. The verse is:

Question—What is that light which is like the Sun?

What is that lake which is like the Sea?

What is that which is greater than the Earth?

What is that which is totally limitless? ¹

Answer—Brahma is the light which is like the Sun!

The sky is a lake like the Sea!

Indra is greater than the world; and

it is the 'Cow' that is limitless! ²

The questions and answers are so clear that there is no scope for interpreting the words 'Brahma', 'Indra' and 'Dhenu' in any other manner than the proverbial.

We have thus reviewed the numerous attempts which have been made to determine the age of the Vedas on the strength of astronomical evidence and speculations. When we consider that the periods suggested by different scholars range between 4,000 to 1,50,000 years B.C., all so confounding and mutually contradictory, we feel that the science of astronomy is also not a very convincing and a conclusive evidence to arrive at the correct age of the Vedas. Regarding those who assign the Vedas to a period between 1,200 to 20,000 years B.C., on the grounds, there also seems to be such a distracting contradiction amongst the distinguished authors like Prof. Max Muller, Shri Vinoba Bhawe, Dr. Sampurnanand and others that a layman has no other go but to say, 'there is no one wise, whose word can be taken as authority.' ³

What do these divergent hypotheses regarding the Vedic age ranging over a distance of time of a hundred thousand

¹ किं स्विस्सूर्यसमं ज्योतिः किं समुद्रसमं सरः ।

किं स्विष्टपृथिव्यै वर्षायः कस्य मात्रा न विद्यते ॥

² ब्रह्म सूर्यसमं ज्योतिर्द्यौः समुद्रसमं सरः ।

इन्द्रः पृथिव्यै वर्षायान् गोस्तु मात्रा न विद्यते ॥

³ नैको ऋषिर्यस्य वचः प्रमाणम् ।

years show? It should be remembered that all these are speculations regarding the possible age of the composition of Rig-Veda. To take the least controversial conjecture, Rig-Veda texts cannot be brought to later than 4,000 years before Christ. Once we accept the vernal equinox in 'Krittikas' (Plædias), according to the reference in the Shatapath Brahman, which can be precisely calculated to be 3,000 years B.C., then it follows that the Rig-Veda must belong to at least 4,000 years before. This inference is beyond all controversy. Tilak holds the same view and there is a universal agreement regarding the proposition. If there be some doubts and objections in this regard, they are not about the inference, but the plausibility of some of the arguments. This proposition, however, establishes only one fact, *viz.*, the later limit, that the Vedic age cannot be brought this side of 4,000 years before Christ.

It does not in any way help in solving the riddle of the correct time or how much earlier it could be taken. Assuming that the Rig-Veda was composed between 6,000 to 4,000 years before Christ, there is also no means to assert what period must have taken for the development of the society to such a high stage of civilisation as is the subject of descriptions in the Rig-Veda. If the traditional belief that the present text of the Vedas is merely what was salvaged in the 'Himapralaya' (descent of the snows), is recalled and if we take into consideration such highly philosophical hymns like the 'Nasadiya' and the 'Asya Vamasya', then it becomes a matter of pure speculation how ancient the Vedic culture could be and how high was the civilisation of the Vedic people. It has defied all attempts to fix the age or assess the value of this ancient civilisation. It is indeed happy to note here that the Western scholars, who have come out of the narrow conceptions about the age of creation and the civilisation of man as preached by the Christian Missionaries, have begun to assert that it is beyond all hope of arriving at the correct estimate in regard to the ancient age of the Rig-Veda.

In the task of fixing the latter limit of the Rig-Vedic times, Tilak has succeeded in placing it as far back as possible by his so-called 'Dhruva' proposition. But in regard to the farther limit

or the beginning of Vedic civilization, he had also nothing more convincing to say. Tilak has lucidly summarised how the ancient Bharatiya notions and convictions as well as the modern researches are reconciled on the question of the ancient age of the Vedas. Tilak says:—

‘We may therefore safely assert that the religion of the primitive Arctic Home was correctly preserved in the form of traditions by the disciplined memory of the Rishis until it was incorporated, first into crude as contrasted with the polished hymns of the Rig-Veda in the Orion period to be collected later on in Mandalas and finally into Samhitas; and that subject-matter of these hymns in inter-glacial, though its ultimate origin is still lost in geological antiquity. Without mixing up the theological and historical views, we therefore now state the two in parallel columns as follows:—

Theological view :

(1) The Vedas are eternal (Nitya), beginningless (Anadi) and not made by man (Apaurusheya).

(2) The Vedas were destroyed in the deluge at the end of the last Kalpa.

(3) At the beginning of the present Kalpa, the Rishis, in substance, if not in form, through ‘tapas’, reproduced all the anti-deluvian Vedas, which they carried in their memory by the favour of God.

Historical view :

(1) The Vedic or the Aryan religion can be proved to be inter-glacial, but its ultimate origin is still lost in geological antiquity.

(2) Aryan religion and culture were destroyed during the last glacial period that invaded the Arctic Aryan Home.

(3) The Vedic Hymns were sung in post-glacial times by poets who had inherited the knowledge or contents thereof in an unbroken tradition from their anti-deluvian forefathers.

On comparison of the two columns, it will be found that the tradition about the destruction and the reproduction of the Vedas recorded by Vyasa in the Mahabharata verse referred to above, must be taken to have been founded substantially

on a historical fact. It is true that according to Puranic chronology, the beginning of the current 'Kalpa', is placed several thousands of years before the present time. But if according to the estimates of some modern geologists, the post-Glacial period is, even now, said to have commenced some 80,000 years ago, if not earlier, we need not be much surprised at the Puranic estimate, especially when as stated above, it is found to disclose a real tradition of 10,000 years assigned to a cycle of the four 'yugas' (epochs), the first of which began with the new Kalpa, or in the language of geology with the present post-Glacial period. We may, however, still assert that for all practical purposes, the Vedic religion can be shown to be beginningless even on strict scientific grounds.

(*Arctic Home*, p. 458).

Thus according to the ancient commentators as well as the modern research scholars and scientists, the beginning of the Vedic age cannot be correctly guessed. It is therefore no surprise that the question of the original home of such an ancient people should become a major controversy of the modern times. The Western scholars propagate the theory that the Aryan people whose social life, culture and civilisation are reflected in the Vedic literature had migrated to India from some place in Central Asia. Tilak on the other hand, tried to establish the theory that, that original home of the Vedic Aryans was the region round about the North Pole.

This region of the North Pole, the Arctic region, though uninhabitable today on account of its extreme cold was, Tilak has shown, worth habitation in ancient times before the deluge in the inter-glacial era. He has resolved successfully all the doubts about this one point in his reputed treatise—'The Arctic Home in the Vedas'.

It was in the year 1,820, for the first time that J. G. Rhodes had advanced a proposition on the evidence of the geographical descriptions in the chapter of *Vendidad* in the Avesta, the book of religion of the Parsis, that Central Asia was the original Home of the Aryans from where they spread over the whole globe. Schlegel, Pott, Lassen Jacob, Grim, Pictet

and other Western scholars endorsed and propounded further this theory of Rhodes. Dr. Latham however disproved the proposition and advanced an argument that the original home of the Aryans had to be searched somewhere in Europe. Prof. Kuhn supported this new theory and located this place somewhere to the west of the Ural mountains and the north of France and Germany. There were a number of scholars who endorsed this view. But Prof. Gaiger, expressed his disagreement with the theory and pleaded that Germany was the original home of the Aryans. This dispute about the original home is not confined to these above mentioned different theories. There are a large number of scholars who have been advocating for Russia, Turksthan, Uphratis delta, Scandinavia, Iceland, Hungary and the adjoining territories, to be the home of the ancient Aryans. Dr. Warren was the first research scholar who came forward the first time to plead in his 'Paradise Found' that the Arctic region was the place where there must have been human habitation in the ancient past. Tilak supported this proposition of Dr. Warren and on the evidence of Rig-Veda and Zend-Avesta, tried to establish that region as the original home of the Vedic Aryans. The basic thought at the bottom of this whole theory is that the original home of the Vedic Aryas must have been somewhere beyond Bharat from where they must have migrated to different parts of the globe. It was out of these migrating people one horde entered Bharat, conquered the original race residing here and settled down as the masters of the land.

If someone asks why was it necessary to go in search of the original home of the Vedic Aryans outside Bharat, the palpable answer seems to be another hypothesis of the European scholars that the composers of the Vedic hymns were a people belonging to a distinct human race. The basis for this hypothesis is the imaginary evidence adduced in the study of comparative philology. The myth of a common or identical race also rests on the fascinating science of comparative philology and the sciences of anthropology and ethnology. The European scholars discovered some resemblances in the diction and in some common words of Greek, Latin, Tutoic, Celtic.

Slavonic and the Zend language of the Avesta. On this discovery they built their theory of a group of related languages, which they named as Indo-European. All these languages in their opinion, must have had a common mother sometime in the past, as their origin and the people who spoke that language must have resided at the same common place. As the ancestors of the present races which speak Sanskrit, Greek, Latin, Zend, Tutoinic, Celtic, Slavonic, spoke one language and resided in the same original home, these Western scholars advocated, they must have belonged to the same common stock. These tentative suggestions, surprisingly without being proved, soon acquired the weight of established theories. The idea of a common original language was conceived and propagated by Prof. Max Muller. He labelled those people as 'Aryans', which form is derived from the Vedic term 'Arya'. This hypothetical name 'Aryan' which was suggested to be given to the hypothetical race, the common stock of different human races soon came to be taken as a real fact on account of its resemblance with the term 'Arya' in the Vedas. The idea of an original stock of people, called 'Aryas' in the Vedas and Aryans by Max Muller came to take a firm root. It is strange though true that the theory that a common or similar language presupposes common ancestry was not acceptable even to Max Muller, the father of the idea of common origin of languages. The Anthropologists also totally discard this theory. A number of very cogent reasons can, however, be assigned to explain the fact of the same or similar language being spoken by different people. From the conquest of a race to its primitive state of civilisation anything could become a justifiable reason for the resemblance of languages of peoples. That alone cannot establish common ancestry and heritage. Max Muller himself does not put more meaning in the term Aryan than that 'they speak the languages derived from the same common mother'. He does not plead that resemblance of languages can prove common stock of the race. Max Muller says:

'Aryans are those who speak an Aryan language, whatever their colour, whatever their blood. In calling them

Aryans, we predicate nothing of them except that the grammar of their language is Aryan. I have declared again and again that if I say Aryans, I mean simply those who speak an Aryan language. When I speak of them, I commit myself to no anatomical characteristics. The blue-eyed and fair-haired Scandinavians may have been conquerors or conquered. They may have adopted the language of their darker lords or *vice-versa*. To me, an ethnologist who speaks of Aryan races, Aryan blood, Aryan eyes and hair is as great a sinner as a linguist who speaks of a 'dolicho-cephalic' dictionary or a brachy-cephalic grammar (long-headed and short-headed). As a matter of cold fact, and despite many opinions on the subject, we know very little racially about the ancient Indo-Europeans. We do not know whether they were one race or a mixture of types.'

—('We Europeans').

Despite all this plain speaking and cautioning by the original conceiver of the idea of common language, the hypothetical term 'Aryan' came to convey as an established theory of a race of Aryans which was firmly embraced by the European scholars and their blind disciples. Those of the Western scholars who did not accept the hypothesis to be well proved, draw the inference that at the least the races spoke a common language. But these also affirmed that their original home must have been a common one in some common place. These dissenters however coined different names such as Indo-Germanic, Wiros, Indo-Europeans, etc., to name the ancestors.

The Europeans of the present times claiming to belong to the same Aryan race of the old days, imagined that the Aryans must have had the same features and colour as the present-day Europeans. These Aryans of fair white colour, long sharp noses and blue eyes left their original home in the Arctic region according to the theory of Tilak in the inter-glacial epoch and descended to different directions. This superior race of Aryans, wherever it went conquered the original inhabitants of the place and ruled over them imposing on them completely their culture and domination. The Aryans being

white, the races which they conquered must have been black, as in the thoughts of these Western scholars, the white race is born to rule and the black to be ruled over. This prejudiced notion of the Westerners had its effect upon their theories in the field of pure historical research also. It is on that account that the black races are presented as the enemies of the white people. They call them as the Dravidas, Asuras, and Dasyus, etc. With such horrible presumptions when the Western scholars handled this subject they began to unfold the history, seen as if by some eye-witnesses, as one continued aggression and conquest of Bharat by the Aryans, the land which belonged to and was occupied by the black races.

Dr. Bagchi, Illiot Smith, Coldwell, Sir Herbert Sisley and others propounded the theory that the predecessors of the Aryans in Bharat were people belonging to Austric and Dravidian races of black colour, long heads and flat noses. These aboriginals had according to the above scholars a higher civilisation and a richer language. Later on as a sequel to the discovery of an old civilisation buried in Mohen-jo-daro, it came to be asserted, that the Indus-Valley civilisation was not Aryan but Dravidian in form and content. It was also suggested that these Dravidians and the Sumerians belonged possibly to the same race, as was said to be proved from their scripts. When it is, however, recalled that the coins discovered in Mohen-jo-daro bear Sanskrit names, there is no go but to infer that the civilisation was of the Vedic Aryans. It has to be said with regret that these scholars do not deduce theories from the record and evidence as they are discovered, but try to interpret all the discoveries to endorse their preconceived ideas. And in this, they care not, if they have to set aside more reliable evidence of philology, which is otherwise held supreme, and depend upon the uncertain and imperfect science of anatomy long-and-short-head measurements, etc., in order to assert that the Mohen-jo-daro civilisation was not Aryan but Dravidian.

The late Shri Daji Nagesh Apte had, years back, very boldly advanced the proposition that Sumerian and Vedic people

were racially identical and their civilisation was also common. His thesis convincingly based on astronomy, philology, religion and mythology was not, however, considered to have been established, the Mohen-jo-daro civilisation was denied to be Aryan, and the identity or the near relation between the Arya and Sumerian civilisations was refuted. These imaginary Aryans when they came to the borders of this country, Bharat, could conquer the original inhabitants as their arms were superior to those of the black inhabitants. This hypothesis of common race of Aryans, their migration and subsequent conquest of the black races had been so effectively propagated that even such a giant of a genius like Tilak came under its influence and accepted it without thorough examination. Tilak had accepted this theory of the common race deduced from the study of comparative philology and endorsed it in his reputed book the 'Arctic Home in the Vedas'. It is a misfortune that having all the genius and intellect to test the truth behind the theory he accepted it without doing so. Amongst the modern scholars, only Dr. Ketkar had had the clarity of thought to grasp the fallacy, and the courage to boldly expose it. Dr. Ketkar observes: 'The Europeans were so much fascinated with the word 'Aryan' that they began to apply the term to themselves and then followed the cycle of different connotations of the word. Having failed to understand this fact, the careless Western and many an 'Indian scholar persuaded themselves to believe that the word 'Aryan' is merely a derivative of the Sanskrit word 'Arya'. They thus started understanding and translating the Vedic word 'Arya' as 'Aryan' and the English word 'Aryan' as Arya. This is a total misconception of the word. The rendering of the Vedic word 'Arya' as 'Aryan' is a gross misuse of the word in a far-fetched sense. An effort is being made to clothe the Vedic word 'Arya' with the sense of the Aryan as the Europeans want to understand and present it. The argument which the European writers have advanced for this idea is as follows:— In very ancient past, in the days of the Vedic mantras some people migrated to Bharat. They were fair in colour. They called themselves "Aryas". Those whom they fought were

black people and they called them "Dasyus". From those Dasyus the Aryas conquered this country.' Thus having first prepared the premises and the conclusion the Western scholars have written the history in a very simple manner. The idea at the root of this argument is of course a fact that the difference of colour excites hatred and enmity. And then having supposed that all the original inhabitants of this land were black people, who were labelled as Dravids, and Dasyus, it became very simple inference to assert that the incoming 'Aryas' defeated these original black races of the Dasas. As the Europeans were alleged to have some secret and ulterior motive in presenting this sort of reasoning and process of the conquest of the black by the white in order to find a historical justification for their own aggression and conquest of the black races, there was also a similar dormant desire in the minds of the educated few Indians who welcomed their theory and endorsed it gladly. They thought in their minds, that in doing this they would have the satisfaction of being called the descendants of the Vedic Aryas and would at the same time be related to the Europeans, who began to call themselves 'Aryans'. It was such a train of thought, it may be unpleasant to confess, that inspired many of our scholars to endorse the view, as this at once placed them in the class of one-time conquerors of the Dravidians, the alleged black races of Bharat, as distant brothers of the present Europeans. The European idea to sum up is as follows:—(1) The people who created the Vedic literature belonged to one particular stock of the human race; (2) the stock of the race was called the 'Aryas' which became their racial name; (3) the Dasyus belonged to a totally different race, they were invariably black; (4) it was on account of the mixture of the white and black that the caste came to be evolved; (5) for all practical purposes colour and caste are synonymous; (6) caste originally was derived from colour; (7) the difference in colours accounted for the caste system which became broadly fourfold. Such are the ideas that have spread far and wide. How far they are correct and justified nobody, neither Europeans nor Bharatiyas, have cared to examine or investi-

gate. It is unfortunate that the above set of ideas and the logic behind them are flattering to both the Europeans as well as the Hindu Brahman scholars, which is the real reason why they are not being attacked and exposed. But this tendency is really a great handicap and a hurdle in the task of historical research.'

(Maharashtriya Jnanakosh, Part III, p. 27-28).

Thus it becomes necessary to understand the word 'Arya' in all its aspects before we make an inquiry into their original home or of the home of the people whose life and civilisation are reflected in the literature that is broadly known as the Vedas.

CHAPTER IV

THE ARYAS AND THE ANARYAS

THE word 'Arya' occurs innumerable times in the Vedic literature. At no place, however, it is used to denote a race. This one fact shakes the very foundation of the whole structure of theories based on the term 'Aryan' coined by the Europeans. At least that peculiar hypothesis of the 'Aryan race' fabricated by the Western scholars can be shown to have no relation with the people whose life and civilisation are reflected in the Vedic books. We have already referred to the unambiguous opinions of ethnologists and philologists like Prof. Max Muller, how wrong and deceptive it is to draw any inference of common ancestry from the unity or resemblance of languages. Comparative philology having thus been admitted as undecisive and insufficient to prove the unity of race, one has to turn to the other evidence. But before we do that let us examine the evidence of literature which is more eloquent and weighty. The literature we mean is of course the Vedas themselves. The Vedas contain the word 'Arya' innumerable times. What is the sense in which so significant a key-word has been used in the Vedas?

The words 'Arya' and 'Dasyu' are of common use in the Vedas. But neither of them denotes a race. It is a misfortune that our history-books are all written on the hypothesis that these were two distinct races always at war against each other. That is a myth without any substantial basis. In the first place, there are not very many wars in the Vedic literature. The wars which are referred to are all amongst the Devas and the Demons. The only one that could be reckoned as a real war was the Dasharajna War (War of Ten Kings). But even that was certainly not a war between the two races, the Aryas and the Dasyus.

The European scholars first came across the word 'Arya' only in the Vedic literature. They found that this word was sometimes used in opposition to the word 'Dasyus'. On that discovery they began to build their theory of the strife

between the Aryas and the Dasas. These European scholars have fallen into many similar errors. For instance, finding the names of rivers mentioned in the Vedas, similar to the rivers in the Punjab, these learned researchers jumped to the convenient conclusion that the whole of the Vedic literature must have been written in the Punjab. Having prejudiced themselves that the Arya was a race of people, and finding it on the border-land of the country of Punjab, they deduced a conclusion that the race must have come from somewhere outside India. Next noting the fights between the so-called fair 'Aryas' and the black 'Dravidas', who resisted them, they drew the corollary that the Aryas were the invaders and the Dasas were the conquered race, the original inhabitants of this land. But bear well in mind, there is no evidence to show that this supposed aggressor race bore the name 'Aryas', or that this land was inhabited only by the black-coloured Dasyus or Dasas whom the Aryas conquered. And yet the Europeans have almost taken these two as axioms. It can be clearly proved that all this is blind man's bluff.

Dr. Ketkar has suggested some tests to be remembered in the interpretation of these two words—in the sense of races. He lays down: (1) 'the uses of the words in their other-worldly meanings should not be taken as basis for our investigation; (2) all extracts in which the word "Arya" is used as an adjective in the sense of a civilised and refined person or class should not be taken into consideration; (3) the use of the word "Arya" in which it denotes colour and class, cannot be useful in our study; and (4) the use of the word "Dasyu" in a figurative sense in such phrases as "destruction of the Dasyu enemy" cannot teach us anything.'* If all the mentions of the words Arya and Dasyu which occur in the Rig-Veda and the Atharva-Veda are applied this test, we find that in not a single instance were the words used to denote the race. On the other hand, if it is assumed, that the Dasyus were the enemies of the Arya race, that also cannot be sustained by the Vedic texts; rather we find in the Vedas the com-

* Maharashtra Jnanakosh, Part III. p. 29.

posers of hymns referring to both the Aryas and Dasyus as the enemies whom they desired to conquer. The following two mantras from the Rig-Veda and the Atharva-Veda say:—

‘He who worships you, O Manyu, you bestow on him the all conquering strength; with Thy support, we shall vanquish both these our enemies the Aryas and Dasyus.’ (R-V 10-83-1 and A-V 4-32-1).

With the alleged superior arms in their hands, how can the theory of the Aryan race pitched on the borders against the Dasyus of Bharat to make their forced inroad survive in the face of such explicit statements where the Aryas themselves are mentioned as the enemies?

In another place we are told:—

‘O Indra, bless us with inexhaustible and eternal strength enabling us to overpower our enemies, so that the Dasas can be turned into Aryas; and our own relatives who are now

“आसमेतमिन्द्रणः स्वस्ति शत्रुत्थयिष्वहतीममृधाम् ।

यया दासान्यार्याणि वृत्रा करो वज्रिन्सुतुकानाहुषाणि ॥”

our enemies will be crushed.’ If the term ‘Arya’ was here used in the sense of a particular race of specific blood, how could it be imagined that the Dasas could be converted to the race of the Aryas? If the Dasas could be turned into Aryas, it clearly indicates that the word ‘Arya’ was used in the Vedas, not in the sense of race, but purely to denote culture and qualities. To so impute the import of race and family in the word Arya is pure imagination without any logical or real substance in it. Similar is the fate of the fanciful inferences drawn about the supposed fair colour, blue eyes and sharp noses of the Aryas contrasted with the black colour and flat noses of the Dasyus. The Vedic Sage Kanva, who was the Preceptor of a branch of the White Yajur-Veda has been described in the Rig-Veda (M. 10: 31) as black in colour, though he was a full-blooded Arya. It is evident from this instance that an Arya could be black as Kanva was, whom

“यस्ते मन्योऽविधद् वज्रसायक सहः ओजः पुष्यति विश्वमानुषक् सद्याम दासमार्यं त्वया युजा (वयं) सहस्कृतेन सहसा सहस्वता ।”

nobody would dare say to be a Das. What we have quoted above is not a solitary expression of the desire to vanquish the Arya and Das enemies. The Vedic Rishis have in many other places given vent to this their pent-up feelings against both the Aryas and the Dasyus. In the following verses, the Vedic Sage says:—

‘O, much-praised Indra, those Dasas, and Aryas who do not worship, if they itch to fight against us, may you help us to vanquish them. There is no doubt that we shall kill them in the battle.’ (R. 10.38.3).

यो नो दास आर्यो वा पुरुष्टतादेव इन्द्र युधये चिकेतति ।

अस्माभिष्टे शुषहाः सन्तु शत्रवः त्वया वयं तान्वनुयाम संगमे ॥

‘O Protectors of the Good, Indra and Agni, you destroy all those Aryas and the Dasas who obstruct us; you destroy all our enemies.’ (R. 6.60.6).

“हतो वृत्राण्यार्याहतो दासानि सत्पती । हतो विश्वा अपद्विषः ”

The term ‘Arya-Vritra’ in the above verse has been explained by Sayan as the ‘enemy in the person of Arya’. Mr. Griffith also agrees with this explanation of Sayan. Sayan’s comment on

“आर्या वृत्राणि आर्यैः कर्मानुष्ठातृभिः कृतानि उपद्रवजातानि ।”

(Sayan Bhashya).

the word is fully convincing. He says: ‘Arya Vritra is one who creates obstacles in the Aryas’ performance of the sacrifice by such acts as “Abhicharik”, etc.’ There are innumerable tales of such incidents in the Puranic literature. If all those stories are taken into account and a comprehensive interpretation is attempted, then there is no escape but to come to the conclusion that the term ‘Arya’ is not a denomination of the race or colour, but a determination of the virtues and culture of a refined and civilised mode of life.

This word ‘Arya’ occurs 33 times in the Rig-Veda, and 16 in the Atharva-Veda, seven times out of which the Rig-Vedic mantras are repeated. Modern scholars hold the Rig-Veda to be the only ancient piece in the Vedic literature and hence it would be enough for our purpose to examine the particular references appearing in it. The common meanings of

the word as used in the Rîg-Veda are, master, God, learned, singer, devotee, host, good and noble, impelling spirit, friend, man devoted to action, and patron, etc. The Atharva-Veda also uses the word in similar senses. Now, applying the tests laid down by Dr. Ketkar, the word seems to invariably indicate specific qualities and virtues. The original import of the word was to indicate the people who possessed unexpected devotion to the 'institution of sacrifice' which was considered to be the indispensable virtue or the inseparable characteristic of the noble community. From this the word came to denote a status and a culture supposed to be superior than those of the people from amongst the non-conforming Aryas themselves and the Dasyus generally, who did not perform the sacrifices. Dr. Ketkar opines that the word is a distinguishing mark between those who perform the sacrifices and those who did not. The priest class had of course its enemies in both the folds of the performers and the non-performers of the sacrifices. The word 'Dasyu' does not seem to have been used, however, to indicate a race or a tribe. Thus the term Arya used to denote only those people who performed their sacrifices in a particular manner. But the European-coined word 'Aryan' does not connote this sense. The long strife in the then society to which we get numerous references, was between the people of the same country which included both the white and the black. It is not necessary to imagine that the white people came from somewhere outside and fought against the alleged black aborigines and conquered them.

One of the strong arguments on which this myth of 'conquest of the black' by the 'white' is fabricated is based on the word 'Varna'. The four classes because they are called 'Varnas', the whole society is alleged to have been divided according to the shades of their skin colours. There is however one genuine difficulty in accepting this thesis as the relevant colours are only two, but the classes which they have given rise to are four. Thus this explanation of the word 'Varna' in the sense of colour being the basis of the four-fold division of the society is not convincing. Further more, the performance of the sacrifice was not the only criterion to be

called an 'Arya'. Besides this unadulterated devotion to an inviolable rule of life, there was also another qualification, namely, the capacity to know and speak a perfect language of sixty-three or sixty-four syllables which the Aryas had evolved. The Aryas who spoke this accomplished language have often expressed their ridicule and railing at the Asuras who could not pronounce some syllables like "ॠ" ('R'). Those, who shouted "हेल्योहेल्यः" are described to have been defeated. These latter were individualists and worshippers of the dead and their corpses. When we consider this contradistinction, we have naturally to conclude that the 'Arya' meant only those people who belonged to a superior status and culture and followed a distinct mode of life, and who could well excel in the use of a language having sixty-three or sixty-four syllables. It is very evident that the Rig-Vedic Aryas were very proud of their language which they considered to be the most refined and perfect.

Thus we have broadly indicated the meaning of the word 'Arya'. Now let us turn to the words Das, Dasyu, Asur and Dravid, the alleged rivals of the Aryas. What we can concede at the most is to accept that the 'Dravid' was a distinct community. Even for those who hold this view, it is impossible to show, however, that the Dravids had any culture very much distinct from that of the Aryas.

What is the evidence for suggesting that the Dravidians were a distinct race with a pure culture of their own? It is vaguely imagined that the relics of an ancient civilisation buried under the debris in Harappa and Mohen-jo-daro have had something to do with the Dravidian race and its culture. The interpretations of the relics discovered there are, however, subjected to a severe attack from various scholars with the result that now nobody is inclined to accept the first hypothesis that the relics prove the existence of the Dravidians as the original inhabitants of this country who were conquered by the in-coming Āryas. The Harappa remains with some coins and coloured pottery, were discovered in the year 1921, in the district of Montgomery in the Punjab. Next year another sight at Mohen-jo-daro furnished more evidence of a

long-buried civilisation. Under the supervision and direction of Sir John Marshall, the then Director of Archaeology of the Government of India, diggings were carried on at both the places for a number of years till about 1927. On the finds in the unearthed cities, Sir John Marshall, prepared a monumental volume 'Mohenjodaro and Indus Valley Civilisation' which was published in the year 1931.

Now the articles recovered from these sites bear indeed a close resemblance to those collected as the relics of the Sumerian civilisation in ancient towns. Research scholars have produced a complete thesis on the basis of the evidence supplied by Mohenjodaro. Their conclusions are broadly as follows:—

The people of the Indus Valley had an elaborate knowledge of town-planning. Mohenjodaro is one such specimen of a planned town with well-laid streets and roads, long and broad, and opening to the east. Big and well-built houses, public halls, kitchens, baths, excellent water-channel system, and filtering arrangements are supposed to be there. All the building work was finished with burnt bricks and plastered with 'chunam'.

It appears that the people had a kind of picture-script; but at the same time some inscriptions bearing writings in Sanskrit alphabets have been also recovered.

From this Prof. Langdon infers that this script of the Indus Valley was possibly the original script from which the Brahmi was evolved which later became the common source of the Deonagari and other Indian 'Aksharmalas'—alphabets. Pictorial representations of 'Earth Goddess', 'Shiva in the Yogasan', 'Tree-Worship', 'Worship of the Linga' and such other things have been discovered in the diggings. From the script found on the carvings, scholars deduce a resemblance in the people of the Indus Valley with the Sumerians. It is now decisively held that the civilisations of Harappa and Mohenjodaro are identical. The common opinion of these scholars is that this civilisation has no relation with the Vedic, but that it is nearer to the Sumerian and in some respects higher than the latter. It is also argued that this Indus Valley civilisation is

of a Dravidian type, and that the Dravidian and the Sumerian people belonged to the same stock of human race. If one were to ask the logic behind such inferences, then again, we are given the same chain of hypothetical pre-suppositions which have been mentioned before. We are told that the 'Aryans' confronted the Dravidians on the frontiers of India. These Dravidians were the worshippers of the 'Shishna Devas' as mentioned in the Rig-Veda. Because some symbols and idols of the 'Linga' are found in the Mohen-jo-daro, these scholars suggest that the people who built that civilisation must have been Dravidians. For the proposition of the identity or the near relation of the Dravidian and the Sumerian peoples, they advance the arguments of ethnology, the anatomy and the cephalic indexes. (It will be noted with interest that the word 'cephals'—G=Kephals, is the same as the Sanskrit word 'Kapal'— (कपाल) which means the forehead). If, however, one examines critically all these different arguments advanced in support of the theory, so many glaring fallacies will become self-evident. The term 'Shishna Dev' which is the foundation of the fantastic theory, that the Dasyus were the worshippers of the 'Ling' and that the Indus Valley people were such worshippers of the Linga and therefore they were Dravidians, is itself of a very dubious meaning. The term 'Shishna Dev' as used in the Rig-Veda does not mean 'the worshipper of Ling' as it is supposed to do. It simply conveys the sense of a sexy or looseness of character. If this sensible meaning is taken, the whole hypothesis falls to the ground.

The Dasyus are described in the Vedas as 'Adevayu', 'Ayajvan' (अदेवयुः, अयज्वान्), 'Avrata' (अव्रत), 'Akarman' (अकर्मन्), 'Anyavrata' (अन्यव्रत), 'Murdeo' (मुरदेव), 'Anas' (अनास), 'Pishangbhrushti' (पिशंगभृष्टि), 'Mridhrawach' (मृध्रवाच), 'Vivach' (विवाच), 'Droghvach' (द्रोघवाच), 'Shishnadev' (शिश्नदेव), and 'Pishang' (पिशंग), 'Kravyad' (क्रव्याद). Out of these epithets applied to the Dasyus, there is no dispute or controversy about the meanings of so many adjectives. Dasyus are said to be 'non-believers in gods', 'non-performers of sacrifices', 'worshippers of other deities', etc. The adjectives

tives which have become the subjects of fierce controversy and disputed meanings are 'Mura-Deva', 'Anas' and the 'Shishna Dev'. The word 'Mura-Dev' is interpreted as those, whose gods were simpletons; 'Anas' means 'noseless', that is flat-nosed; and 'Shishna-Dev' is supposed to mean 'worshippers of the Linga'. Modern critics and research scholars are trying to discover in these words the distinguishing physical characteristics and colour of the Dasvus, their mode of worship and their faith. The word 'Pishangbhrushti' (पिशंगभृष्टि) which was interpreted by them to mean black colour, does not very much strengthen their case, as we have shown that even amongst the Aryas, there were dark-skinned people. We have already referred to the colour of the Sage Kanva, as described in the Rig-Veda. It is indeed this riddle of the words Krishna and Shukla which has given sufficient scope for scholars to weave their wild imaginations depicting the epic struggle between the black-and-white skinned people. Shri V. K. Rajwade, otherwise one of the most talented of the research scholars that this century has produced, has in the name of historical research really woven a thrilling fiction round these two words in one of his many famous volumes, the 'Radha-Madhav-Vilas Champu'. It is forgotten that many a time these two words 'Krishna' and 'Shukla' (Black and White), are used not to describe any colour, but just in the sense of superior and inferior, or good and bad, or of one party or the enemy of it. In the battle of Kashgar, the people of one and the same stock and race were nick-named 'white and black' according to their sides. Kuropatkin in his book 'Kangaria' observes about the Tartar people as follows: 'The opposing' Tartars of the same race were called the White and the Black mountaineers.' Thus though great scholars have gone to the length of deducing an inference to the effect that the people professing the Krishna Yajurveda were a mixed race, it will be apparent that the mere words Black and White do not convincingly prove the same.

What is said about the fallacy in the inference drawn from the words Krishna and Shukla is more true in regard to the interpretation of term 'Anas' (अनास). If the word is inter-

puted to mean noseless, i.e., flat-nosed to denote the anatomy of the 'Dasyus', then there would be a ridiculous situation in that we find proofs in the Rig-Veda itself, to suggest beyond doubt that the anatomy of the Dasyus and the Aryas was similar. There was very little apparent difference which could distinguish them. In the 1st Mandal of the Rig-Veda, Indra

“ विजानीत ह्यार्यान् ये च दस्यवः ”

is asked to 'Know those who are Aryas and the other, Dasyus'. From this it becomes apparent that there was no distinguishing mark for the Dasyus to be recognised as such. Therefore the word 'Anas' does not mean noseless, nor that the Dravidians were flat-nosed. The word only means that they could not pronounce correctly the sixty-three or sixty-four alphabets of the Sanskrit language. The Aryas were exceedingly proud of their tongue and speech. They ridiculed those who could not articulate distinctly the alphabets, as having no noses (to produce the nasal sounds). It is on account of this very reason that the 'Dasyus' were also censured as 'Vivach', 'Droghvach'. In that case the word only means the people who had no nasal pronunciations in their speech.

Coming to the most controversial word 'Shishna-Dev', we charge the modern scholars of having deliberately interpreted it to mean 'the worshippers of Linga' in order to support their theory that the Dravidians had an independent civilisation of their own and that the Indus Valley civilisation was Dravidian. There are certain representations of 'Ling-Worship' in the Indus Valley relics and therefore the Dravidians were called 'Ling-worshippers'. This interpretation is not backed by tradition. Yaska explains the word as 'profligates—those who are plunged in unbridled sexual enjoyment.

“ अन्नह्यचर्याः शिश्रेण दीव्यन्ति इति ”

Yaska who must have inherited traditional interpretation of the Vedas and who of course tried to explain them with his eyes ever fixed upon the central theme of the 'Institution of Sacrifice', cannot be brushed aside in the interpretations of such words, which are not scientific or astronomical. On the other hand, the explanation of the word in context of the

worship of the phallus-Linga is also unwarranted and unfitting in the place where it occurs.

Principal Bidhu Shekhar Bhattacharya in his paper read before the 6th Oriental Conference at Patna, has lucidly explained the various meanings of the word Dev when it comes as a latter-half of a compound word in the old Sanskrit. He tells us that the word 'Dev' when it comes in the latter-half of a word does not mean worshipper but 'devoted'. For instance, he cites the words, 'Matridev', 'Pitrudev', etc., which all mean devoted to, dedicated to, and not 'the worshipper of'. In the Puranic literature we often get a compound 'Stri-Dev' where also it must be taken to mean attached to women. In the same way this word 'Shishna-Dev' also means 'indulgence in sex' and not the 'worshippers of Linga'. This is the sense in which our traditional commentators like Yaska and Sayan explain it and there is no reason to discard their meanings.

Dr. Roy also understands the word in the sense of sex. Dr. Muir emphatically asserts: 'However interesting, therefore, it would be to find a proof of the existence of phallic worship among the aboriginal tribes contemporary with the Vedic Rishis, it must be confessed that the word does not supply this evidence.'

Assuming for a moment that the word does suggest the 'Worship of Linga' what is the evidence to show that the worship was found only with the 'Anaryas' or the Dravidians, except the pet and patent speculation of the European scholars who are totally ignorant with the forms of worship and the institution of sacrifice of the Vedic people. Maha Mahopadhyaya Krishna Sha-htri Ghule has on the other hand very convincingly repudiated all these theories in regard to the 'Linga-worship' and established that phallicism had its root in the original Fire-worship. In his famous and universally accepted article: 'The Origin of Mahadeo' he has shown beyond all doubt that there is no need to presuppose a separate culture to account for the fact of the phallicism in Bharat. That rather endorses the view that the Indus Valley civilisation is only a part of the Vedic culture and that therefore the discovery of the 'Worship of Linga' in the unearthed

relics does not prove that the civilisation was Dravidian. However, it is amusing to note that the great scholar, Sir John Marshall, who has deciphered the finds and given an interpretation of the civilisation does not notice any very great resemblance there with the alleged Sumerian culture and civilisation. On the other hand, he finds a greater difference between the two. Sir Marshall observes: 'Points of difference between these civilisations are more numerous than the points of similarity.'

—(*Times of India* : 28th Jan. 1929).

Those who have studied the discovered finds of the Indus Valley have however noted that the diggings do not convince one of a whole and complete civilisation; it is only a representation of a part of some great one. It will be noticed that in the set of tools and instruments and some weapons that have been recovered here, there are no weapons of war at all. This is a perplexing fact in as much as it cannot be imagined that a people who were at that stage of civilisation should not be conservant with the art of war and its weapons, or that they could live their life in peace without use of them or recourse to war in those early days. The absence of arms and weapons in that window on the alleged Dravidian civilisation poses a question: How did they carry on the struggle with the 'Aryans' without arms and weapons, if they at all did it? That leads one to the conclusion that at the most the discovery is of a part of social life of the people just as if the campus of a university or the like. Only such a supposition can explain the partial manifestation of a civilisation as unscreened in the Valley at the sight of Mohenjodaro which was buried underground as a result of some great natural cataclysm like an earth-quake or an unprecedented deluge.

There are certain finds in the dug-out city, which cannot at all be satisfactorily explained except by recourse to Vedic ideas and ways of life. That also necessarily forces a conclusion on us that the civilisation, glimpses of which we get in the Indus Valley diggings, was decisively Vedic.

We have already referred to the two pictures in the finds. In one, two faces are shown to shoot forth from branch of a tree; in the other six faces peep out of the branches of a similar tree. Some scholars have thrown out a fantastic speculation that the representations are of ghosts living in the trees. How ridiculous it is; to claim a high level mark for the civilisation on one hand, and on the other hand, to impute such a primitive idea of the worship of ghosts and goblins to the people who had reached such a rich stage of life and thoughts? Both the pictures in our view can be fully and sensibly explained on the background of two hymns in the Rig-Veda, viz., 'Asya Vamasya', etc. The hymn says:

“द्वा सुपर्णा सयुजा सखायः समानं वृक्षं परिषस्वजाते । तयोरन्यः पिप्पलं स्वाद्वत्ति मनश्चनन्यो अभिचाकसीति ।”

‘Two winged comrades in life and love perch on the same tree; the one eats sweet “pippal” fruit; the other enjoys the sight (without testing the fruit)’. It actually means, the sight pleases the other which flushes in contentment.

The concept of two bird-comrades and the beginningless protector of the ‘six universes’ occurring ahead in this ‘sukta’ is, we think very effectively illustrated by the two pictures in the Mohen-jo-daro. Only this explanation fits in with the state of civilisation which we are ascribing to the people whose life is supposed to be reflected in the valley unearthed. It will, therefore, be right to hold that the Mohen-jo-daro civilisation is just a part and parcel of the Vedic one. Thus is disputed the theory of a separate civilisation of the Dasvus, Dasas or the Dravidians.

Is there any other independent evidence to suggest much less to prove the existence of any exclusive civilisation of the Dravidians and the Dasvus? Honest scholars have admitted their helplessness. For it is invariably experienced that wherever some supposed evidence in support of the Dravidian culture and civilisation is discovered, it is never found to be independent and exclusive but always mixed up with the signs and symbols of the Vedic culture. Why not then honestly admit that there is nothing like pure Dravidian culture and

civilisation at all? Dr. Keith in his volume on 'The Religion and Philosophy of the Vedas' has, after all his attempts to trace an independent Dravidian civilisation had failed, observed: 'We have insufficient knowledge of what was true Aryan, and we know facts regarding Dravidian though only long after it had been affected by the Aryan invasion. Here as often confession of ignorance is preferable to the affectation of knowledge.'

Dr. Pran Nath holds the view that the Indus Valley Civilisation is originally a facet of the Vedic Civilisation. It was from here, according to him, the people carried the social culture and civilisation to Sumer, which is now come to be called the Sumerian civilisation. It is on that account that, there is so much resemblance between the two. Dr. Pran Nath has rightly traced the resemblance and identity of some Sanskrit names with those in the Mohen-jo-daro excavations. But what he further says about the Sanskrit language and the Vedas is totally absurd. This learned Dr. observes: 'In the period 4,000 years before Christ, the Sumerians inhabited the regions between Egypt and North India. The dialects of North India have their source in the Sumerian language. Sanskrit is a product of the mixture of Sumerian, Phoenician, Egyptian and other languages. The Rig-Veda is the history book of the Sumerian people, because we find therein references to regions, and towns, and kings belonging to a period from between 4,000 to 1,000 years before Christ.'

It is amusing to read the above astounding and absurd thesis coming from Dr. Pran Nath, who adorns the chair of a professor in the Banaras Hindu University. Before he recommends us to read the history of Sumer in the Vedas, he should have first repudiated the well-established theory, now universally accepted, that the Vedic times in no case can be taken this side of 4,500 years, before Christ. There is not a single Vedic scholar, worth any claim to scholarship or without it, who has ever suggested that the Vedas or a part of them could have belonged to a period after one thousand years B.C. What is the authority to suggest that the scripts of the Vedic Aryas and the Sumerians are similar? Dr. Pran

Nath has endeavoured to read the pictorial script. But there is indeed no measure or means to accept the sounds and pronunciations which Dr. Pran Nath suggests. The European scholars have all confessed their inability in this regard. 'It must be remembered that the reading of the most of the early Sumerian proper names is merely provisional, as we do not know, how the idiographs of which they are composed were pronounced in either Sumerian or Assyrian.' (*Encyclopædia Britannica*). This is the general consensus of opinion in this matter. Not minding all these odds, Dr. Pran Nath has ventured to suggest that the Rig-Veda is a history-book of the Sumerian people on the ground of purely imaginary sounds and pronunciations of certain words, which are supposed to be similar to names in the Veda.

It will be amusing to note here how great scholars on very flimsy grounds at times try to build theories which are all pure fabrications. Dr. Pran Nath in order to substantiate his theory that Rig-Veda is the history of the Sumerian people and that it was composed in Chaldea, has caught hold of a single word in the 133rd Sukta of the 1st Mandal of the Rig-Veda. The words 'Vailsthan'—'Mahavailsthan' occurring in this hymn appear to Dr. Pran Nath to be identical with the 'Bail' in Chaldea. On this apparent but unproved phonetic similarity he builds the castle of his theory. He argues that this hymn tells us about the victory of the Aryas over the Chaldeans in a very severe battle and the conquest of Babilon (Vailsthan). The fallacy in the argument is that the hymn does not mention of any battle as such, leave aside a serious one. There is no doubt a reference of three batches of fifty persons of the enemy having fallen dead in the cemetery the fire-place which is the traditional meaning of the word. But this certainly is not a great battle in which only a hundred and fifty people are said to have been killed. The Aryas fought severe battles in which six thousands of heroes are said to have been put to the sword. (R.V. 7-8-14). Moreover, the word 'Vailsthan' has nothing to do with the Bail in Chaldea. It has a distinct and definite meaning given by the traditional commentators which is very correct as it is

found to be endorsed by its consistent use in a language like Marathi which has, as other Indian languages must have, adopted, so many Vedic words in their pristine form and sense. Such one is the word 'Vailsthan' which means an Indian style fire-place, or hearth, more exactly an annexe of the hearth in which all rubbish things are thrown. Thus it is futile to read the history of Sumeria in the Rig-Veda simply on the resemblance of some one word here or there.

The so-called Dravidian culture and civilisation of which much is talked of, where do we get its exact content and shape? It will have to be admitted that this Dravidian civilisation also has to be understood only on the background and material available in the Vedas. Shri Shesh Iyengar in his thoughtful book confesses: 'Regarding the pre-historic period it has already been shown how from the Vedic literature, we could learn something. . . . Beyond these few references, our knowledge, as regards the political organisation of the Dravidian society in the pre-historic period is sadly defective.' The words which are supposed to give us an idea of the Dravidian civilisation are 'Shishna-Dev' and 'Anas' and the like, and we have shown how they are being wrongly interpreted.

We have tried to show how fallacious is the theory of the related 'Aryan' languages, having on the ground of their palpable resemblance with Sanskrit, a common source; and that being so, it is much more fallacious to infer from this hypothetical resemblance of languages a common stock of all the supposed 'Aryan' races at some remote time in the past. Does this much-boasted theory of similarity of languages stand proved? All these languages have been stretched to establish their relation with the Sanskrit—whereas the real fact is that the Zend alone has a sisterly relation with the Sanskrit. But our scholars who are little acquainted with the German and the French and much less with other Semetic languages take this proposition propounded by European scholars for granted. Nobody has gone to enquire into the real facts beyond satisfying oneself with the resemblance or identity of a set of primary words relating to domestic and social family relations. It is our firm conviction that there is

nothing like a resemblance between the so-called Aryan languages beyond the above referred set of words. Shri Ramchandra Vinayak Patwardhan is perfectly right when he says that no scientific research and analysis of the relation and resemblance of the Indo-Aryan or Indo-European languages has been made yet. Even assuming that the languages do resemble—what does that prove? Dr. Keith observes, 'All the Indo-European languages have certain special points in which they agree with one or another of the group, and to deduce racial mixture and migration from these facts is quite impossible.'

Now coming to the proposition of the alleged resemblance of languages—let us see how far it is true. The Vedic Language Sanskrit of which the Aryas are so proud, contains sixty-four alphabets. How is it that no other language has this number of alphabets? The Sanskrit has three kinds of accents: 'Udatta', 'Anudatta' and 'Swarita'—with which only the word becomes complete in sense, form, etc. It is a well-known fact that with different accents the meanings of Vedic words alter. Is this seen in other languages? There are only half-vowels in these European languages which are totally absent in Sanskrit. It is rarely seen in other languages that meanings change with change in pronunciations. Nobody seems to have paid any attention to this subtle aspect of the Vedic Sanskrit, in the noise and bustle of the drumming of the commonness of Indo-European languages. We have, therefore, to warn these scholars who find resemblances in the languages and from that the races, that they must go with care in their mad search.

From the examination of the supposed similarity of languages, the history of the word 'Arya' in the Rig-Veda, the examination of the relics discovered from the Mohenjodaro, the Sumerian script and its phonetics, and last but not the least important, the strained effort to put desired meanings on some old words to explain particular presupposed theories such as finding the 'ling-puja' in the Mohenjodaro excavations, and deducing the existence of independent Dravidian civilisation therefrom, all these show that the word Arya is

not at all used in the Vedas in the sense of race or human stock. The supposed descriptions of the eyes, noses, colour and form of the Aryas is nothing more than a myth. Where do you get all these specific references to blue eyes and fair colour and sharp noses, etc.? The word Arya as used in the Vedas means only those who were devoted to performing the sacrifices, those who spoke a perfectly refined language of sixty-three or sixty-four alphabets, and broadly, those who were civilised and noble in their social behaviour and contract. It has been shown that there are references to the Aryas being dark in colour and it can be proved to the hilt that the so-called Dasas were eligible to become Aryas as the very motto of the Vedic Aryas declares that they wanted to convert the whole world into 'Arya'. On the other hand, the

“ कृष्न्तो विश्वमार्यम् । ”

allegations that the Dasas, Dasyus and the Dravidians were dark in colour, flat-nosed and ugly in forms is also a baseless proposition. That the flat-nosed, dark-coloured worshippers of the 'linga' were Dravidians is yet another myth without any substance in it. At least from the Vedas there cannot be produced any material to point to a separate and independent civilisation ascribed to the Dravidians. There is no independent evidence to prove the existence of such a distinct culture and civilisation in ancient India.

The words Dasyu, Das, etc., occur a number of times in the Rig-Veda. The word 'Asur' also occurs many times. It is therefore necessary to examine the meanings of these words here in the context in which they are used in the Vedas.

In the later literature, however, the word Dasyu is rarely found. It can be taken for certain that both the words have a common meaning in the Vedas. Dasyu is used in Rig-Veda 79 times, while the word Das is found in 56 places. Both the words are used in context of the conflict which Indra had with them. It is in some few places that they are mentioned as being defeated by other deities like the Maruts, Rudra and others. It will be remembered, however, that the words are used in relation or connection with human beings few times.

Similar is the case with the word Das. In a hymn talking of the Dasas, the chanter prays for such wealth by which a Das could be turned into Arya. From all these references and contexts, it has to be said that the Dasyus and Dasas are both a progeny of a particular deity class; at least it will be admitted without hesitation that they do not belong to the human class, belonging to this very earth but to some heavenly sphere. The strife between the Dasas and the Devas which has been the subject-matter of many a hymn has been described in the Vedas not in the present tense, as in the 'War of Ten Kings' but as an anecdote of some remote age regarding the battles between them and the Indra or the other Gods. It is only in the course of description of Indra's exploits that these heroic victories over the Dasas have been narrated. If the concept of the Devas and the Dasas as revealed by the Rig-Veda is properly grasped, then it will not be difficult to reconcile the meanings and understanding the terms in their correct historical sense.

The Gods in the Rig-Veda have no physical forms but have been described as impersonal symbols or concepts. The Vedic sages talk of their Gods in terms of a treble-concept as if they possess a soul, a body and a divine spirit. The Vedic seers seem to have realised the oneness of physical form and the divine spirit of their Gods. Of all of them, Indra is their most beloved and popular deity. Indra is the ideal of Super Godhood. The place of Indra in the Rig-Vedic pantheon is as high as that of Rama and Krishna of post-Vedic Bharat or as of Pandurang, especially in Maharashtra. This Indra performs repeatedly marvellous meritorious deeds, kills Vritra every now and then. He destroys all the evil powers that afflict the life of the Vedic sages and singers.

If we examine all the hymns which relate to the heroic exploits of Indra narrated by the sages and composers and all those that refer to the evil deeds of the Dasyus, we come across surprising sentiments and events. These hymns reveal an unbounded love and devotion of the sages for their most favoured and benevolent God Indra who has destroyed the Dasyus. But these are the references to the heroic exploits of

Indra in the remote past. Thus it comes to this that these hymns are the songs of the victory of the spiritual and heavenly bodies over the dark forces in nature. It is like a poetic recollection by some mediæval saints like Tulsidas and Tukaram doting upon the conquests of Narsimha, the fourth Avatar of Lord Vishnu over the demon Hiranyakashipu. It is therefore clear that the fight between Indra and the Dasyus, which is in reality a conflict between the benevolent forces in nature and the dark destructive elements, has nothing to do with the alleged conflict between the Aryans and the Dravidians. The Rig-Veda does not bear out any allegation of the strife between the Aryans and Dravidas. The Dasyus and the Asuras are the dark forces in the spiritual or the heavenly sphere. It is well-known how in the mediæval age the Islamic vandals were contemptuously nicknamed as Rakshasas, demons, on account of their heartless cruelties and *iconoclasm*. So was the analogy conceived by the Vedic seers about all those groups and tribes of nomadic and anti-social hordes wandering all around the civilised Aryas. These people who had no culture and civilisation, who never worshipped Gods or performed sacrifices, who were beyond all rules and regulations of social ethics, who could not speak the refined language of the Aryas, and who always indulged in physical pleasures and unbounded sensuality, were labelled as Dasyus and Asuras by the Vedic composers.

The word Asura comes from the root 'Sura'. Sura means to control, to keep in bounds and order. Those whose thoughts and lives were motivated by controls and conventions, those who recognised the necessity of social etiquettes and moral rules, and those who held life to have some more spiritual ideal before them, were in short called the Devas and the Suras. Those who did not fit in with the above description were naturally censured as Asuras. The prefix 'A' in grammatical Sanskrit has seven shades of meanings. But in the Rig-Vedic use, it is used in one additional sense of 'excess—'Ati''. This sense suggests something that is in abundance, something that is beyond measure. *There are numerous instances in the Rig-Veda which illustrate this use.* In this sense

referred to above, the word Asura has been found to be used in some places in the Rig-Veda. If the word Sura denotes a person or 'power', whose life and career is regulated by good rules and conventions; the word Asura would naturally mean someone that is beyond all control or regulations, that is either the controller of all or one who cannot be controlled by anybody, that means the Almighty God or the Devil. It is well-known how the element of life in the form of breath is called Vayu—wind. Before this element came to be called 'Vayu', it was named as 'Tanu-Napat', as soon as it became manifest out of its primary element. While accounting for this name, the Smriti says, 'Tanu-Napat is called the progeny of Asura.' Here the word Asura means, without any doubt, the Almighty and 'Tanu-Napat' is the child of that 'Almighty', the prime element. So on one side the word Asura means the Super Godhood, the Almighty, i.e., beyond all bounds and conventions, and on the other hand, we get exactly the reverse sense in some places in the Rig-Veda, viz., those who, in the bad sense, never recognise any rules and regulations and indulge in boundless gratification of their physical senses. The use of the word in the latter sense is found more than in the first sense and in later times, it is astonishing that it is invariably used in the latter sense only. However, the word Asura still retains the first meaning in the 'Avesta', the religious book of the Parsees. 'O Indra, these our rivals defy all

“अनायुधासो असुरा अदेवाश्चक्रेण तां अप वप ऋजीषितम् ।”

our weapons; They are so powerful. These Asuras who consider themselves to be superior to God, defy all rules and behave without any morals and are thus too proud and obstinate. May you, therefore, come to our help and destroy them.' This hymn is an unambiguous illustration of how the words Deva and Asura were understood and used. When we therefore take into consideration the usage of the words Indra and Dasa or Dasyu, we come to the conclusion that they first denoted elements in the spiritual sphere and were later applied to human beings which resembled them in their virtues and vices. The two epithets have come to be

used in the Rig-Veda to denote the Good and the Bad, the social and the anti-social, the controlled and the uncontrolled, the worshippers and the non-worshippers, the cultured and cultureless or in general, the Aryas and the Dasyus.

Ethnology, Anatomy, and such other sciences are yet in their hypothetical stages. They are not conclusive. They may, at the most, indicate the differences of the races and the diversities of the stocks of human kinds residing in Bharat. We, however, never subscribe to the view that the whole society is always of a uniform structure and class or that a race has its own single exclusive culture. We rather oppose this view. In England we find a mixture of races, but having only one composite culture and character. So also it is equally possible that even in Bharat there had been an inseparable mixture of many races. But there is no doubt that their civilisation was one and that was Vedic.

We have attempted to show that there is no basis to hold that the words 'Arya' and 'Dravida' or 'Anarya' were used to denote races. There is no convincing evidence in the Vedic literature to endorse the theory that there was a continuous conflict between the two races called the Aryas and the Dravidas. It is also not possible to establish any conclusion on the evidence of the Vedas that the Vedic people had different colour and anatomy from those of alleged original residents of Bharat. It naturally follows that the Vedic civilisation was not imported by the Aryans into Bharat from anywhere outside, simply on the ground that there is a resemblance of languages. The people whose culture and civilisation are reflected in the Vedas, were not of the 'Aryan' race in the European sense, or belonged to the same stock as of the ancestors of the present-day Europeans. Lokamanya Tilak has with great force and skill laboured to prove that the original Home of the Vedic Aryas was at some time in the Arctic region. What is really the original home of the people, whose life is reflected in the Vedic literature? Is it in Bharat or in some distant Polar regions? Are we migrants or the original inhabitants of Bharat? We shall consider this question in the next chapter.

CHAPTER V

THE ORIGINAL HOME OF ARYAS

IN the last chapter we have dealt with the problem whether the words Arya and Anarya are race-names or only adjectives denoting a culture and civilisation. We have shown that it is not possible to prove any independent and exclusive existence of the Dravida civilisation. If at all any such distinct civilisation ever existed after the Vedic times in this country, then it definitely follows that it was an off-shoot of the Vedic civilisation. All the speculations about the original home of the Vedic people either in Central Asia or in some European region, advanced by Western scholars or endorsed by their Bharatiya followers, have been rejected as baseless. The enquiry and investigation into the original home of the Aryas has now come to stay on the thesis of the North Pole region propounded so learnedly and convincingly by the late Shri B. G. Tilak. It is no surprise that confronted by the eloquent and emphatic assertion of this theory of that genius amongst Vedic scholars, the small voices of objectors faded into insignificance, and what remains for the common people is, as if an established fact, that the Arctic region was the 'original home of the Aryas'. It has, therefore, become more necessary to state our objections to this theory and enquire into the real home of the Vedic people. Let us brush aside all other speculations which have been already disproved. Starting with Tilak's theory of North Pole, let us see if we can discover and locate the real Home of the Aryas. What is then this theory of the Arctic Home as propounded by Tilak?

Sometime after the publication of the famous treatise—'Orion'—Tilak came across certain references and descriptions in the Rig-Veda which he felt did not fit in with the theories of the original home being in Bharat or in any other place in the world till then named. Tilak imagined that the interpretations which were put on those references were very

strained and unnatural. He was convinced that those descriptions could be very satisfactorily explained if it was supposed that the Vedic people originally lived in the region of the North Pole or round about it. Thus, on the one hand while he felt sure that the particular descriptions in the Vedas applied only to the conditions in the Arctic region, he was perplexed by the apparent impossibility of any human life surviving in that region on account of its climatic conditions which made it uninhabitable for life and uncongenial for vegetation. Tilak had then no idea that it was probable that at some remote time in the past, the climatic conditions of the region were congenial to human life. Later on with the researches and investigations of geologists, a hypothesis almost verging on truth came to be propounded that this Arctic region had in some remote age a climate and conditions congenial for human habitation. The evidence advanced by geologists was more encouraging to the theory that Tilak had almost evolved in his thoughts. As to how, when, and why this human colony poised at that extreme end of the globe was dissolved and dispersed, the answer came in the hypothesis of the geologists that there descended a glacial epoch in this region which compelled human society to abandon their homes. This geological discovery strengthened the theory of Tilak as it solved many inexplicable riddles in the Veda. Having examined in the light of this new discovery, all the naughty problems which had checkmated the Vedic scholarship till then and having found satisfactory explanations to them in the theory of the North Pole and the region round about it being the home under quest, Tilak enunciated it in his epoch-making treatise: 'THE ARCTIC HOME IN THE VEDAS'. Tilak observes:—

THE POLAR CHARACTERISTICS

'The peculiar conditions available only in the Arctic region which are not even imaginable in any other place on the globe are the following:—

1. The sun rises in the south.
2. The stars do not rise and set; but revolve or spin

round and round in horizontal planes, completing one round in twenty-four hours. The northern celestial hemisphere is alone overhead and visible during the whole year; and the southern or the lower celestial world is always invisible.

3. The year consists only of one long day and one long night of six months each.

4. There is only one morning and one evening in the whole year, or the Sun rises and sets only once a year. But the twilight, whether of the morning or of the evening, lasts continuously for about two months or sixty periods of twenty-four hours each. The ruddy light of the morn, or the evening twilight is not again confined to a particular part of the horizon (eastern or western), as with us, but moves, like the stars at the place, round and round along the horizon like a potter's wheel completing one round in twenty-four hours. These rounds of the morning light continue to take place until the orb of the Sun comes above the horizon, and then the sun follows the same course for six months, i.e. moves without setting round and round the observer completing one round every twenty-four hours.

The circum-Polar characteristics are as follows:—

1. The sun will always be to the south of the zenith of the observer. But as this happens even in the case of an observer stationed in the temperate zone, it cannot be regarded as a special characteristic.

2. A large number of stars are circum-polar, i.e., they are above the horizon during the entire period of their revolution and hence always visible. The remaining stars rise and set as in the temperate zone, but revolve in more oblique circles.

3. The year is made up of three parts, (a) one long continuous night, occurring at the time of winter solstice, and lasting for a period greater than twenty-four hours and less than six months according to the latitude of the place; (b) one long continuous day to match occurring at the time of the summer solstice; and (c) a succession of ordinary days and nights during the rest of the year, a nycthemeron or a day and a night together, never exceeding a period of twenty-four hours. The day after the long continuous night is at

first shorter than the night but it goes on increasing until it develops into the long continuous day. At the end of the long day, the night is at first shorter than the day, but in its turn it begins to gain over the day, until the commencement of the long continuous night with which the year ends.

4. The dawn at the close of the long continuous light lasts for several days, but its duration and magnificence is proportionately less than at the North Pole according to the latitude of the place. For places within a few degrees of the North Pole the phenomenon of revolving morning light will still be observable during the greater part of the duration of the dawn. The other dawns, namely, those between ordinary days and nights, will, like the dawns in the temperate zone, only last for a few hours. The Sun, when he is above the horizon during the continuous day, will be seen revolving without setting round the observer as at the Pole, but in oblique and not horizontal circles, and during the long night he will be entirely below the horizon, while during the rest of the year he will rise and set, remaining above the horizon for a part of twenty-four hours, varying according to the position of the sun in the ecliptic.'

—(Arctic Home, pp. 58-60).

The above phenomena characteristic with the polar and the circum-polar region is not to be witnessed in any other part of the globe. The polar stars are fixed. They are today as they were millions of years before. It is therefore logical to conclude that the characteristics which were observed formerly in this region can be observed even today, without the slightest change. If the Vedic literature described these phenomena which are witnessed today in that region, it follows that the people whose life is reflected in the Vedas and those who had composed them must have resided sometime in that region, or that they must be relating the recollections of their ancestors having done so.

Now on a close analysis and observation of the 'institution of sacrifice' of the Vedic people, it will be noticed that the same was regulated by the movements of the Moon and the

Sun. Their sacrifices were periodical ranging over a day, a fortnight, a month, three months, six months and a full one year. This fact leads one to the conclusion that these their divisions of time into days and nights, months and the year are the same as ours at the present time and that they had nothing to do with the polar region. In the Taittiriya Samhita and the Brahmana, there is an unmistakable mention of a Lunar month of thirty days and the year made up of twelve months. The Vedic people, it appears, knew without doubt, the six seasons of the year, the vernal-equinox and the winter equinox and also the directional points of the East and the West. They had a year of three hundred and sixty days with an intercalary month occasionally added. 'Varun knows the twelve months and also the one that multiplies.' This expres-

“वेदमासो धृतत्रतो द्वादश प्रजावतः वेदाय उपजायते”

(Rigved 1-25-8).

sion proves the fact of their knowledge beyond doubts. It was this fact, viz., that the Rig-Vedic calendar differed, if at all, very little from the one which we have at present, that, Pandit Kashinath Shastri Lele relies upon to attack the Polar theory of Tilak, and disprove it. But it should not be forgotten that Tilak has nowhere stated that the authors of the Rig-Veda were themselves the residents of the North Pole. Tilak's theory is that it was the early ancestors of the Rig-Vedic sages who must have resided in the Polar region, sometime in the remote past, and it was their experiences handed over from tradition to tradition to the Vedic sages who described those ancient memories. Tilak's theory is regarding the original home of the ancestors of the Vedic Rishis. Such references and descriptions even if they be few are significant in the search for the original home.

The phenomena which we have noted above have been described in the following hymns of the Rig-Veda. In 10-89-4

“यो अक्षेणेव चक्रिया शचीभिर्विष्णुस्तम्भ पृथिवीमुत्तथाम् ।”

(Rigved 10-89-4).

Indra is said, 'to separately uphold by his power heaven and earth as the two wheels of a chariot are held by the axle.'

In Rig-Veda 2-15-2, the same idea is suggested in 'the sky has

“अवंशे द्यामस्तामयत् ।”

(Rigved 2-15-2).

been supported even without a pole.' So also in Rig-Veda 10-59-2, Indra is identified with Surya and is described as

“स सूर्यः पर्युरुवरांस्येन्द्रो ववृत्त्याद्रथेव चक्रा ।”

(Rigved 10-59-2).

'turn the widest expanse like the wheels of a chariot.' Thus it will have to be admitted that this description of the ceaseless spinning of the dome without any palpable support is a peculiar phenomenon only in the region of the North Pole. The sky in the temperate and the tropical regions can also be described as moving in a round like a wheel from east to west. But the tropical sky can never be tipped off as being spun round and round without the support of a pole which can only happen in the polar region. Coming to the next phenomenon of a day and night of six months each, we find the idea so ingrained in our thought and life that it has almost become an axiom that the year of twelve months of our calendar is equal to one day and night of the Gods.

This notion is as old as the Brahman literature. In the Taittiriya Brahman we have: 'This is the one whole day of

“एकं वा देवानां ब्रह्मः यत्संवत्सरः ।”

(Taittiriya Brahman).

the Gods that we call our year.' Such a conception is possible to be entertained only in regard to the day in the Polar region only and would be considered as fantastic in any other portion of the globe. Though there is no specific reference to this unusual day and night in the Rig-Veda as such, we get clear references to the fact in the Zend Avesta. There are, however, unmistakable references to the long days and nights in the Rig-Veda. In the Parisishta (appendix) portion, there is a mention of a frightful long night in the winter which is called by the poet 'Durga' (difficult to pass over). The prayer offered to this long night leaves no doubt that it is not one from among the normal nights of ours.

Now looking to the hymns regarding the 'dawn', it at once becomes clear that these dawns are not as they are observed in Bharat, but only in some place in the Polar region. We have already indicated the characteristics of the Polar dawns as they are actually observed today. Let us then look to the descriptions of the Vedic Seers of the dawns which they witnessed and find out if they pertain to the Polar regions.

'Usha'—the Dawn—is one of the most enchanting of the Vedic deities. The Vedic poets who were enraptured by the beauty in nature have rightly held 'Usha' as the most beautiful enchantress that their eyes ever met. They have dedicated as many as twenty hymns on this their 'Goddess of Inspiration'. These hymns which stand out as supremely beautiful in the poetry on nature in the world literature could not have been inspired by the short dawns seen in the temperate or tropical regions. It does not seem feasible that the Vedic sages could have expended their poetic genius on so short-lived morning hours of the temperate zones. It behoves then that they should pour their hearts after the beautiful 'Usha' of the Polar regions only.

The long period of the Vedic 'dawns' can be fixed from a prescription appearing in the Aitareya Brahman. This Brahman prescribes the recitation of one thousand mantras by the Hota (priest), before the start of the 'Gavamayan' Satra

“गवामयन”

“आश्विनशास्त्र”

(sacrifice). The set of mantras to be chanted on the occasion are called the 'Ashvin-shastra' and the mantras are dedicated to matutinal deities, 'Usha', 'Agni', and the twin Ashvins.

While explaining this prescription Nirukta clarifies that the chanting should be commenced after the mid-night when the darkness begins to be dispelled by the first indication of the light. The Brahman advises the Hota to sip some 'Ghee' before he commences the recitation of the prescribed mantras. The idea behind this practical advice is to facilitate the chanting of the mantras by the Hota without any trouble or

interruption. 'It is like', says the Brahman, 'lubricating the

“नाश्विनं हैव तद्यदर्वाक् सहस्रं तस्मात् तत्सहस्रं वैव शंसेत् भूयो वा, प्राश्य
घृतं शंसेत् यथा हवा इदं मनो वा रथो वाक्तो वर्तते एवं हैवाक्तो वर्तते”

(Aitareya Brahman).

wheels of a cart before it starts on its journey.' From this very careful practical suggestion one can be convinced about the length of the 'Shastra' of the thousand mantras. The Ashvalayan and the Apastamb Shraut Sutras have the following to add in regard to the above prescription. 'If the recita-

“यस्याश्विने शस्यमाने सूर्यो नाभिर्भवति सौर्यं बहुरुपमालमेत सर्वा अपि
दाशतैरनुब्रूयात् ।”

tion of the 'Shastra' is completed before the Sun-rise, then some other mantras should be recited till the Sun rises. If the 'Shastra' is insufficient to cover the time, then the Hota may recite even all the ten Mandals. It then follows from the above prescription to chant the 'Shastra' after the mid-night, and if it is insufficient to cover the time upto the Sun-rise, then to go on reciting even ten Mandals of the Rig-Veda, that it was indeed a peculiar night and a dawn to presuppose the requirement of reciting one thousand mantras and the number of mandals of the Rig-Veda. If it was anything it was certainly not the dawn of an hour and half with which we are so much acquainted. Unless we presuppose that the author who gives the above injunction and the practical advice had a long dawn of many days before him, the prescription cannot be satisfactorily explained. But there is another more convincing proof in the following: 'O, how many days have elapsed since dawn

तानि दहानि बहुलान्यासन् या प्राचीनमुदिता सूर्यस्य ।

यतः परि जार इवाचरन्ति उषो ददृक्षे न पुनर्यतीव ॥

first made her appearance before the Sun rose. This Usha was seen to flirt round the Sun as round a lover.'

This description of the 'Usha' leaves no doubt that it pertained to the dawn in the Polar region. There are other references in the Rig-Veda in which the poet asks why the Sun does not arise though a number of days had elapsed after

the appearance of the Usha. From all the descriptions of the Usha, we are able to enumerate the following characteristics of the Vedic dawns:

(1) 'Usha'—the Rig-Vedic dawn extended over such a long period that a number of days (of twenty-four hours), elapsed between her first appearance on the horizon and the rise of the Sun; or as it has been described in the Rig-Veda a chain of dawns one after the other appeared continuously before the Sun emerged on the horizon. (Rig. 7-76-3).

(2) All the references to the 'Usha' in plural numbers are not in the sense of respect or in context of the three hundred and sixty dawns of the year but in the sense of thirty divisions in the chain of one long dawn. (Rig. 1-23-8; 6-59-6 and the Tai Samhita 4-3-11-6).

(3) The many dawns coexisted in perfect harmony without any quarrels or overlapping.

(4) The thirty divisions of the one long Usha were distinct and separate from each other but in a continued invisible chain.

(5) All these thirty 'Ushas' or the thirty divisions of the one Usha spun round and round and came to the self-same spot again and again.

Like the descriptions of the long dawns, there are references of long nights, and prayers for early relief from them. The Vedic sages prayed:

“ अदिते मित्र वरुणोत् मृळ यद्वो वयं चकृमा कच्चिदागः ।

उर्वश्यामभयं ज्योतिरिन्द्र मा नो दीर्घा अभि नशन्तमिहः ॥ ”

'If we have offended you, in any way, O Aditi, Mitra and Varuna, kindly forgive us; confer on us the light which will dispel all fear; let not the long and frightful darkness envelope us.' (Rig. 2-27-14).

The above prayer offered by Gritsamad to the three deities clearly expresses the fright which the Vedic sages entertained about the long nights. There are many similar references ventilating the same sentiments.

In a prayer occurring in the Atharva Veda, the poet says: 'We are overcome by the night; may you reach us safely across

the darkness; let every night pass without any injury to ourselves.'

प्रपन्नोऽहं शिवां रात्रिं भद्रं पारमशीमहि ।

रात्रिं रात्रिमरिष्यन्तस्तरेम तन्वा वयम् ॥

(Atharva Veda).

The learned commentator Sayan who had no knowledge of the conditions in the Polar region and the probability of human life having ever been possible in that region is at pains to explain the above prayer. Being confounded by the literal sense, he has explained away the prayer as referring to the fear caused by a long winter night. When the Vedic bards pray for the clearance of the long nights which were certainly frightful, they must have been worried by the doubts whether the Sun would follow the terrible night at all or not. And this certainly refers to the long nights in the Arctic regions.

The Rig-Veda calls the Sun as the child of the South. This is possible only on the presumption that the seers lived in the Arctic regions for at any other place it would be ridiculous to call the Sun as the child of the South from where he never comes up. This visual perception of the rising of the Sun in the South is the main ground on which Tilak concludes that the observer is describing the sun-rise of the Arctic region. He must have therefore belonged to the region. It is mainly on this direct evidence Tilak builds his theory of the Arctic Home of the Vedic Aryas. Having thus settled his central theme on the strength of the reports of eye-witnesses of a natural but exceptional fact he supplements his theory with numerous Vedic allegories bearing upon the life in the region, the evidence of language and the Parsi Avesta geological investigations, etc. We have broadly referred to the main grounds on which he has formulated his theory. To render it unassailable he was required to show that the Arctic region which he wants to establish as the original home of the Aryas, was habitable at least at some time in the past. Happily for him the later researches in the geological conditions of the region came to his help. It is therefore now

necessary to state briefly what geological hypothesis he relies upon to strengthen his thesis.

(1) The latest investigations in the geological conditions advance a theory, that about ten thousand years have elapsed since the close of the glacial age and the commencement of the post-glacial epoch. This estimate of the post-glacial epoch has been mainly arrived at from the freshness of the fossil deposits of the skeleton of animals recovered in the Siberian region.

(2) Man is not merely post-glacial as he was believed to be some years ago. There is conclusive geological evidence to prove his wide-spread existence in the Quarternary, if not also in Tertiary era.

(3) There were at least two Glacial and one Inter-Glacial periods; the territorial distribution of land and water on the earth during the inter-Glacial period was quite different from what it is at present.

(4) There took place great changes in the climatic conditions in the Pleistocene period; it being cold and inclement during the Glacial, and mild and temperate in the inter-Glacial periods, even as far as the Polar regions.

(5) The Arctic region both in Asia and Europe, was characterised in the inter-Glacial period by cool summers and warm winters, making as if a perpetual spring. There is evidence to show that places like Spitzberge, where the Sun remains below the horizon from November to March, were once the region of a luxuriant vegetation, that grows at present, only in the temperate or the tropical zones. The descent of the Glacial age that disturbed this congenial climate rendering the regions unsuited for the habitation of tropical plants and animals.

From all these findings as a result of the geological investigations Dr. Warren advocates the view that the Arctic region which was habitable then was not only the home of the Vedic Aryas but the original home of the human race. After the publication of the Arctic Home in the Vedas, Tilak's theory secured popular recognition dislocating all the prior speculations to insignificance and oblivion. There appeared a wave

of enthusiasm and endeavour amongst Vedic scholars to interpret and solve the riddles of the Vedic deities in the light of this new discovery of the original home of the Vedic Aryas. 'The original shape and form of Mahadeo'—a learned article of Mahamahopadhyaya Krishnashastri Ghule and the writings of Pandit Satvalekar could be pointed out as attempts in this direction. But there were many Vedic scholars who did not agree with Tilak's theory and they came out with scorching criticisms, assailing the Arctic Home and emphatically asserting that Bharat, Hindusthan itself was that original home of the Vedas. Of these renowned objectors, the eminent were Pandit Kashinath Shastri Lele, Nanasahib Pavagi, Shri Aprabuddha and Dr. Avinash Chandra Das of the Calcutta University, Dr. Sampurnananda and others.

Pandit Kashinath Shastri Lele has nicely presented all the evidences in the support of his theory that Hindusthan was the home of the Aryas. But that was surely not enough to disprove the theory of Tilak. Shri Pavagi and Aprabuddha do not so much oppose the Arctic theory so far as it relates to the original home of the Vedic people. The substantial opposition and criticism of Tilak's Arctic theory came from Dr. Avinash Chandra Das. In his learned contribution: 'The Rig-Vedic India', Dr. Das contraverts the entire Arctic theory propounded by Tilak. On the evidence supplied by the latest geological researches he has tried to prove that the region called the 'Sapta-Sindhu' was the original home of the Vedic people. Dr. Das' arguments which shape the established theory of the Arctic Home propounded by Tilak deserve to be closely studied and respected.

'The Rig-Vedic India' of Dr. Das came to be published soon after the death of Tilak. Dr. Das has expressed his deep sense of sorrow and regret that his thesis could not be seen by Tilak for whom, like every other Vedic scholar, he had utmost regard. Dr. Das' objections against the theory of Tilak are as follows:—

(1) There is not a single reference or even an indirect mention in the Rig-Veda to the destruction of the original Arctic Home of the Aryas either by the snows or the deluge

or to their having migrated to the 'Sapta Sindhu' region at any time. This absence of reference is universally acknowledged by all alike the Western scholars as well as Tilak himself.

(2) Tilak interprets the legends of Manu's fish and the 'Matsya' incarnation to denote the descent of the glacial epoch. They do not refer to the coming of the glacial age; but to the great deluge of water. The descent of glacial epoch is marked by the fall of snows as thick as thousand feet in the Arctic region. There was no water deluge in the Arctic region. Moreover, the only reference which we get to the deluge is not in the Rig-Veda but in a very much later composition, namely, the Shatpath Brahman. It is not necessary nor logical to consider the descent of the snows in the Avesta and the great flood of waters in the Manu's tale as identical. The legend of Manu expressly states that Manu used a boat to save himself in the flood. It is really surprising to assume on one hand that the art of boat-making and navigation had so advanced as Manu could save himself in the great deluge in a boat, and on the other that the Rig-Veda should not consider it fit even to refer to such an unusual occurrence of that singular cataclysm and the strange survival. This rather goes to show that if the legend was true, it had not transpired before the Vedic age, but must have occurred later.

(3) All the facts and phenomena which Tilak alludes to as the characteristics of the Polar region are not even faintly suggested in the Rig-Veda. The evidence which he advances to show all those things strangely enough does not come from the Rig-Veda but is collected from very later books such as the Taittiriya Brahman, Mahabharat, Manu-Samhita, Puranas and the Surya Siddhanta. These evidences may at the most show that the alleged descriptions of the peculiar characteristics of the Polar region came to be known by the narrators as hearsay. How can these descriptions or references be interpreted to conclude that either in the Rig-Vedic age or before it, the Vedic Aryas had some connection with the Arctic region or that it was their original home? To quote the observation of Tilak himself, 'There is no mention of

these things at all in the Rig-Veda beyond few expressions.' But unfortunately the 'few expressions' which he discovers do not lend themselves to the interpretation which he has put on them. If nothing more, at the least the indication of the long day and night of six months each, cannot be expected to miss the witnesses' notice. Even from the later literature what exactly do we gather? From all the descriptions it can be at the highest said that the region was supposed to be the home of the Gods and the seat of super-human powers. Does this not indicate that the time when the Vedic people came to learn about the Polar region it had been transformed into uncongenial conditions for the existence of human life?

(4) Tilak believes that the words 'Devayana and Pitriyana' originally meant the day and night of the Gods. But his is a mere imagination. If we correctly understand the words and their implications then the only interpretation possible of these two words is what the words imply viz. the path of Gods and of the pitaras (fathers) and any other interpretation is invalid.

(5) The 'Usha' in the Rig-Veda, which Tilak has discussed at length, is the dawn seen in the East according to unmistakable descriptions of the Vedic poets. If this 'Usha' extending over a number of days were of the Polar region she could not be described to have arisen in the East—but must appear in the South like the Sun. While arguing the length of the 'Usha' why did Tilak ignore the fact mentioned by the Vedic Seer that the 'Usha' has arisen in the East'. Assuming that the ancestors of the Vedic poets belonged to the Polar region and that they themselves had migrated to Sapta-Sindhu, then they would surely not have failed to mention the miracle of the phenomenon of the 'Usha', rising in the South which was an inconceivable sight anywhere else on the globe. That the Vedic poets say that the 'Usha' bringing light in the East, is an incontestable proof that the observer was in Sapta-Sindhu, that the 'Usha' was, as she appears in Bharat, and that she was the comrade of the normal day and night of ours. There is not a single reference to the day and night of six months each in the Rig-Veda even according to

Tilak. Now if we assume the enchanting description of the 'Usha' as presented by Tilak to be perfectly accurate that it is not of the 'Usha' of two months' duration, is also abundantly clear. He has put forth 'Gavamayan'—'Cow's walk' (ten-month sacrifice) and the 'Ashvin-Shastra' in it as the evidence to support his thesis. If, however, we examine the Shastra, it will be realised that the same has to be recited from evening to the morning. This 'Shastra' is prescribed to be chanted on the second day of the ten-month sacrifice. The first night of the sacrifice was divided into three 'praharas' (divisions) covered by twelve Suktas. Four Suktas have to be recited in 'prahara'. The 'Ashvin Shastra' is made up of total one thousand mantras. One who is conversant with the fact how an accomplished Vedic priest recites the mantras, can very well understand that ordinarily this 'Shastra' would require only so much time as the Sun would take to rise. It takes six hours for the Sun to rise from the appearance of the Ashvinis. It will therefore convince nobody if it is suggested that to recite the one thousand mantras a period of two months' dawn had to be presupposed before the Sunrise. And further, if it be suggested that the 'Ashvin Shastra' was followed by the chanting of all the ten mandals of the Rig-Veda, even that should not require such a long period of time. That is after all a 'prayaschitta'—supplementary prescription as an atonement in case the Sun does not rise at the end of the recitation. That itself conclusively establishes that normally the Sun should rise up by the time the thousand mantras are completed. For all these considerations it has to be presumed that the 'Usha' was the normal dawn. In asking how and why the Seers would expend their poetic genius and imagination over a short fleeting dawn Tilak has not considered the stuff of which the poet's mind is made. The rapture caused by the overpowering sweetness and attraction will surely be more if it is expected that the lovely damsel will disappear soon. If the poet on the other hand were to know that the lovely sight of sweetness and light is to spin round and round him for a period of two months what feeling or impatience would

that sight, persisting all during the twenty-four hours through sixty days excite in his mind? Rather, that would be a monotonous experience which the poet would desire to end soon. The word 'Shashwat' does not require to be interpreted as 'continuous' as has been done by Tilak. That can satisfactorily convey the sense of regularity without any break. Thus the fact of the 'Usha' rising up in the morning as experienced by the poets of Rig-Veda and the prescription of the 'Ashvin-Shastra' of thousand mantras, requiring just the period taken by the Sun to rise after the appearance of the Ashvinis both confirm the view as asserted by Sayan that the 'Usha' is the normal dawn in this country. The poet sings:—

एता उ ला उषसः केतुमकत पूर्वे अर्धे रजसो भानुमज्जते ।

(Rig-Veda 1-92-1).

'Here appears the flag of the 'Usha' in the eastern horizon turning everything into bright sunshine.' (R. 1-92-1). In interpreting this verse, we do not understand why Tilak has ignored completely the expression that the flag has appeared in the east.

(6) Tilak has quoted so many references from the Rig-Veda to bear out this hypothesis of the long day and long night. Of these the one relating to the Indra-Vritra legend seems to be controversial. From the verses referred to by Tilak as it is attempted to be proved that the Indra kills the Vritra once in a year, there are numerous other references of the killing of the Vritra, from which it can also be shown that Indra kills him off and on, as also on everyday. Therefore this tale cannot establish conclusively the long day and night and that also only one each in an year. In his opinion there is one reference in the Agni-Sukta to his (Agni) having slept long at night. But that could be a night of the winter also. This expression conveys only the fact that after the morning and evening sacrifices, the 'Agni', fire lying in the sacrificial altar is not otherwise fanned. In the very next sentence the 'Agni' himself says that he appears in all his splendour whenever the 'Devas' invoke him; and after the sacrifice is over he covers his lustre and sleeps in his place. This does not at

all indicate any special conditions of the Polar region; for in the dark long nights there, only the Sun can go to sleep and not the fire certainly. Rather his heat and light are more necessary in the dark nights in the Polar region. On the other hand, the 'Agni', once the Devas' rites are over, and the oblations are offered, conceals himself in the fire-place to reappear the next day on the invocation of the priests for receiving of the oblations. This certainly is not an evidence in proof of the long night.

(7) Coming to the prayers quoted by Tilak from the Atharva-Veda and from the Durga-Stava in the Rig-Veda, on close and critical examination, it will be seen that they do not help him. In these prayers what has been said, viz.: 'May we reach safely and end of the night; let every frightful night pass off early', etc., has been said only by the Brahmanas, and not by all. How could it be said that the Vedic people who were mortally afraid of the frightful experience of the long night were only Brahmanas? It is very clear that the specific mention of the Brahmanas in this verse has a significant suggestion. The text expressly states:—

“हेमन्ततो रात्रेर्दीर्घत्वेन प्रभातं न भविष्यत्येवेति कदाचित् ब्राह्मणा भीता
अतः पारमशीयेति प्रार्थनया प्रभातं लभते ।”

“रात्रिं वित्रावसुरव्युष्ट्यै वा एतस्यै पुरा ब्राह्मणा अभेषः ।”

(Sayan Bhashya).

This has a specific suggestion. While commenting upon this verse Sayan observes: 'Afraid if the morning will soon arise or not on account of the night being longer since the commencement of Hemant, the Brahmanas pray for getting to the end of the night into the morning.' If this were a special circumstance existing in the Polar region, it ought to be common to all and not alone to the Brahmanas. The term Brahmanas here denotes only the priests and with that meaning of the word the whole verse can be very satisfactorily explained. The priests had to sit round the clock in the nights during the Satra days reciting the mantras ceaselessly. It was quite natural that a feeling should creep in their minds that the night was long; and then if they prayed for the

morning that was perfectly human. If however this had been a night in the Polar region, then the people had never a doubt about its length and would not be afraid of it nor would they consider it as an occasion for prayers. It is not in the nature of man to get doubtful or fearful about events which are the subject-matter of daily experience, and therefore certainly not a fit cause for special prayers and supplications. Moreover it is also a question if the nights in the Polar region were so frightful as they are alleged to be.

“अदिते मित्र वरुणोत मृळ वथं चक्रुमा कच्चिदागः । उर्वश्यामभयं
ज्योतिरिन्द्र मा नो दीर्घा अभिनशन् तमिस्राः ।”

(8) Let us now look at the verse: ‘O Aditi, Mitra and Varuna, if we have committed any offence against you, kindly forgive us. May you bestow on us that light which will dispel all fear, and let not long darkness envelope us.’ The term ‘Dirgha Tamisra’ in this verse Tilak interprets as indicative of the long night characteristic of the Polar region. But the phrase does not in any context connote the physical light and darkness. If the man who pours out his feeling in this verse, were really to belong to the Polar region, then he should have known that light follows darkness as surely as rebirth follows death. If we take into consideration the highly developed notions of Godhood the seer must be credited with the conviction that merely wishes would not chastise the elemental forces and that mere prayers would not usher light by desiring it. And hence the term ‘tamisra’ has to be understood in the sense of ‘ignorance’ caused by evil passions in the corners of human heart. All the prayers in the Rig-Veda offered to Aditya, Mitra and Varuna have a common burden of seeking relief from ignorance regarding the passions and pleasures of senses, and the evil results caused by them. The particular verse under reference has therefore to be taken only in this metaphorical sense.

Thus in short Dr. Das argues and affirms that there is no direct or any unmistakable reference to the phenomena peculiar to the Polar region. He concludes that Tilak’s references are wrong and his thesis unproved.

Tilak and Dr. Das have both based their theories on disputed references. It is difficult to judge who is right and who is wrong. Therefore it becomes more necessary to examine the theories advanced by them in the light of new investigations and findings and decide the problem of the original home of the Vedic Aryas. We shall now turn to that.

Dr. Das has well succeeded in showing that there is absolutely no reference or even suggestion in the Rig-Veda that the people whose life is the subject of the oldest literature of the world had at all come to this country from somewhere outside. There is indeed no direct mention, or even any signs of recollection by the Vedic seers of the people having at any time in the past lost their original home by any such elemental ravages like the descent of snows or the coming of the glacial age on account of which they were perforce required to abandon their homes and seek a new habitation. All this is a fact. This is possibly the most substantial and incontrovertible objection of Dr. Das against the Arctic theory of Tilak. A human race whether civilised or not to which ever part of the globe it may belong has always exhibited an inherent and intrinsic affection and affinity for its motherland. It is seldom, if at all it happens only under extraordinary circumstances, pressures, strains and helplessness, that a race may have to abandon its homeland; and when that does take place, the attraction of the abandoned home and at least the sweet memories of it will never disappear in the afflicted hearts. The heroic and all-conquering Aryas who ceaselessly endeavoured to achieve the Godhood and prided in attaining it, those, who vowed to conquer the world, and turn it into a civilised State, those who reached the highest heights of knowledge and physical and spiritual strengths cannot be ever thought of turning so ungrateful towards their homeland. To suppose that they identified themselves with their new adopted homes and habitations so as to even forget their original homeland is something that human nature is incapable of believing. We have positive evidence of such a fact in the 'Avesta' of the Parsis. This unfortunate race had to abandon its original habitation once on account of cruel

nature's vagaries and a second time because of the ravages of an intolerant religious fanaticism. We know how deeply and how long the Parsis have kept on the memory of the tragedies ever green in all the outpourings of their afflicted hearts. How is it that only the Vedic sages and singers are such ungrateful wretches devoid of the most valuable inherent sentiment common to the human race, that they should not even once mention with sorrow or regrets the great loss of the original home or pine after it in recollections? It is this forceful consideration that weighs with us and we unmistakably feel that they really did not migrate from the polar region but indeed belong to this country of the Sapta-Sindhu itself. It is probable, nay near certain, that they must have come in contact with the Polar region either as conquerors or colonists after the actual Vedic age. We agree substantially with the arguments and interpretations of Dr. Das on the legends of the descent of snows and the great deluge. There is no doubt that had the Vedic people gone through the personal experience of these great cataclysms then they would have never failed or forgotten to mention or recollect the great tragedies in their Vedic songs. All the arguments regarding the Arctic home and the hypothesis built upon them are based upon very indirect, flimsy and no doubt, disputable references which are many times apparently figurative than factual and therefore doubtful. This leads us to believe that the Vedic people meaning the Vedic singers had not come in contact with the Polar region before the Rig-Vedic times. Had that been the case then, as in later literature and like other peoples there should have been allusions and references to the uncommon fact or at least some memories in the Rig-Veda.

Dr. Das in his effort to contravert the theory of Tilak has relied on the verse which mentions that the 'flag of Usha has appeared in the Purva'. He interprets the term 'Purva' as east and gives a verdict that Tilak has conveniently kept silent over it or ignored the word. But here we are of the opinion that Dr. Das is himself wrong in the interpretation of

the word as denoting the eastern direction. Dr. Das has not properly inquired into the meaning of Purva in the Rig-Veda which invariably is never used to indicate the directional east. In the verse under consideration the term 'Purva Ardhe' simply means 'in the first half of the hemisphere' and not in the east. The whole verse is as follows:—

'Here comes up the flag of the Ushas; they are casting their brightening light over the first half of the hemisphere; they are exhibiting their lustrous splendour like the warriors flourishing their shining weapons; these mothers, the ruddy cows are on their way hitherward.'

It is clear that this verse has no reference at all to the direction—the east. It is indeed extremely difficult to disprove the theory of the Arctic Home propounded by Tilak so easily on such wrong references; and yet it is much more difficult to support the Arctic region as the original home of the Vedic Aryas on the strength of the alleged references from the Rig-Veda. It is our suggestion that the acquaintance of the Arctic region must have been formed by the Aryas after the composing of the Rig-Veda, the reflections and recollections of which experience, were recorded in the descriptions of the Mountain Meru, as it appears in later literature. However, if the interpretations of the Rig-Vedic hymns and legends as given by Tilak are accepted as correct it will have to be presumed that the Vedic Aryas did indeed come to discover and know well the Arctic region, which, however, was not their original home as Tilak suggests, but only their colony or conquered occupation. It is indeed serious that the Rig-Veda contains no reference to the original home-land. But the Avesta, unlike the Rig-Veda, describes the original home-land of the Indo-Persians, laments over its loss on account of the cataclysms and describes the migration to a new home.

We have examined above only the arguments and hypothesis based on direct evidence from the Rig-Veda and the 'Avesta' leaving aside the indirect proofs and references which are relied on by both the scholars. These indirect and supplementary evidences only help to confirm the theory established

by the alleged direct references. But when that itself is dislocated, the indirect evidence also totters down. Out of the direct proofs, the references to the Dawns are indeed the strongest. But that convincing description also does so much help to establish the theory of the original home of the Vedic Aryas. That may at the most show that the region was known to them. And therefore while admitting the theory of the Arctic region being known to the Aryas, we are not prepared to concede that it was beyond all doubts their original home-land.

The Arctic theory had been formulated by Tilak on the evidence gathered as a result of the investigations and the conclusions arrived at by geological scientists. But Dr. Das also relies upon the same science of geology to arrive at his theory that the 'Sapta Sindhu' was the original home of the Vedic Aryas. It is very amusing to note how two great research scholars taking their stands on the self-same science of course on two different sets of hypothesis, arrive at quite different and mutually exclusive conclusions, and how both of them have committed a serious error on account of the ever-changing and uncertain data with the new discoveries and novel facts coming to the light.

Dr. Das has relied much upon the descriptions of the river Saraswati in the Rig-Veda. His inquiry about this Vedic river seems to be thorough and very much convincing. In fact an investigation into the course and career of this river, as well as into the effects which she had on the life of the Vedic people changes the very complex and structure of the problem of the original home. It, no doubt, offers tentative clues for the search of the home.

The river Saraswati has played an important part in the life of the early Vedic people. It was on her banks their culture and civilisation were built. It was possibly in the homes on her fertile banks and in her valleys that the 'institute of the Vedic sacrifice' was born and evolved. This grand and beloved river of the Vedic people had cast her enchanting influence upon the Vedic mind as much as the great Sindhu if not more. The Rig-Veda describes this river, as

rising in the Himalayas and flowing down from its heights rushing on to meet the sea. The Rig-Veda says:—

“एकाचेतत् सरस्वती नदीनां शुचिर्यती गिरिभ्य आ समुद्रात् ।”

(R. 7-95-2).

‘Of the rivers the only distinctively sacred and pure one flowing from the mountain ranges down to the sea is this Saraswati.’

This is not the only solitary description of the river. There are other equally vivid and poetic pictures of the river drawn by the Vedic singers. In Rig-Veda 7-95-1, the poet says:—

‘Look at this river rushing with her full stream which sustains the life of the people; like an iron wall she is the reliance of all; there is no doubt that this is the river that excels all others in goodness.’

Further in the sixth verse of the same hymn the singer muses: ‘the over-flowing breast of the river so pleasing to sight to all, blesses us with the water, which sustains our progeny, and the spirit of life.’

In 6-61-2, the Rig-Veda records ‘the river fells the tops and terraces of mountains with the dashing, lashing and leaping of her forceful current as easily as a man plucks the fibres of a lotus; we worship with pure devotion, attention and faith, this river, which destroys the ‘paravats’, in the hope of winning her favours.’

In the sixth Mandal verse 61.13, the sage declares ‘the river Saraswati appears to be the most excellent in greatness and prowess; her current is much more powerful than that of all other rivers; her bed has become very wide in service of the Almighty like a chariot; that river which feeds us with knowledge is really praiseworthy.’

The poet further implores the river to ‘reach her devotees to the most desirable wealth and possessions; not to cut them off from her milk-like water, and render them weak and sapless; not to throw them away (that is not to change her course); appreciate their affection and devotion and not force them to leave her course and repair to some other region in search of shelter.’ (R. 6-61-14).

If we read the above descriptions of the river Saraswati given by Bharadwajas—who had their hermitages on her banks one must get convinced that this was not just a small common stream, but a broad, dashing and waterful river descending right from the Himalayas and pouring her waters straight into the sea. We have quoted only the verses which describe her greatness, her speed, her volume and her course from the Himalaya to the sea. From one verse the poet's anxiety in case the river changed her course is also transparent. Does it not indicate the changing course of the river?

Such was Saraswati which the Vedic sages esteemed to be par excellence, as a river, mother and Goddess, which became the seat of sacred performances, penances and sacrifices. The river region was very fertile and congenial for life for which reasons they loved it most. Above all they considered her banks as a place most fitted for their great sacrifices. It will be noted that the Ganges which acquires a supreme sacredness in the later literature like the Puranas had not yet risen to that pre-eminence and estimation which the Saraswati inspired among the Vedic community. The river Ganga has also been once or twice referred to in the Vedas but she does not receive that attention and devotion which the Saraswati does. (The two rivers which are considered to be sacred in the Rig-Veda are the Drishadvati and the Saraswati and this their high position has had to be acknowledged by the later religious literature of the Hindus. Their sacred influence has been recognised by Manu when he says:—

सरस्वतीदृषद्वत्योदेवनद्योर्यदन्तरम् ।

तदेवनिर्मितं देशं ब्रह्मावर्तं प्रचक्षते ॥

(Manusmriti 2-17).

'The delta between the rivers Drishadvati and the Saraswati is known as the Brahmawarta—the region of the Brahma and that is the godly region.'

The patriarchal sage, Vyasa, had his hermitage on the banks of the river Saraswati. It was in this hermitage on the sacred river that the great sage created his inexhaustible and immortal literature according to the version of the Puranas.

This is Saraswati as described in the Vedas. Now if we look to the present condition of the river as identified by some scholars, one cannot fail to lament or laugh at the surprising metamorphosis in her. The Saraswati of the present times does not go to meet the sea but disappears on the way in the deserts of Rajasthan. It will be noted that the sea is some hundreds of miles away from the last trace of the river. This raises an initial doubt in the minds as regards the identity of the Vedic Saraswati. Some Western scholars go to the ridiculous length of suggesting that the Vedic people were not acquainted with sea at all, and what they meant by 'Samudra' must have been some stream of the Great River Sindhu. They must have, in the opinion of these scholars, named some tributary of the Sindhu as Saraswati. This suggestion is however so ridiculous as it cannot be reconciled with the Vedic description of the river which is said to have shattered the mountain tops and subdued them. An ordinary tributary cannot be so described by the Vedic seers as felling the mountain tops and terraces. Secondly the Rig-Veda contains so numerous references to the sea, more particularly to the four seas, and the eastern and the western seas also, that it is baseless and illogical to attribute total ignorance of the sea to the Vedic people. There are so many places where we get mention of the people sailing in boats in the broad streams of the river Sindhu. Such being the case it is a childish insinuation to say that they were not acquainted with the sea at all. Moreover there are places where the word 'Samudra' is used as an 'Upaman,' a standard of comparison, like the Sindhu, in which so many tributaries poured their waters. This suggestion therefore requires no further refutation, as it is beyond all doubt, that not only the Vedic people knew the seas, but sailed on it for trade and for pleasure or for conquest to distant lands.

Having said so much, let us ask which was that sea in which Saraswati poured her waters. If we assume that the Vedic bards have described and sung about the things which they saw with their own eyes and knew them personally, and this should not be doubted at any moment by any one, then

the times when these hymns were composed, the river must have been seen, taking her rise in the Himalayan ranges, descending in the plains by cutting her way across and over the hill-tops and running down to meet the seas. Which was that sea which the seers meant? There is no doubt that the Rig-Veda was composed in an age in which the river Saraswati met a sea. Let us therefore inquire when and where such conditions prevailed to make the river flow into the sea.

And this necessitates our resorting to the geological investigations that have been made during the last century. Tilak himself has taken his stand on the geological research to prove his Arctic theory. Dr. Das also relies upon the same science mainly to disprove Tilak's theory and advance his own findings. Dr. Das has endeavoured to prove on the strength of the geological investigations that at one time there was a sea in the region which is now known as Rajasthan. In fact the theory of these *geological* scientists is that a long arm of the sea, stretched from the west to the east from the present Rajasthan, right up to Assam. This long belt or a gully of the sea divided the north of Bharat from the South.

A question is rightly asked very often, if what we say that the Vedic people belong to this very land from the unknown beginnings is true, how is it, that there is no mention at all of the South, and the southern regions in the Rig-Vedic literature. This silencing question has also been very satisfactorily answered by the above research of geologists. This theory asserts that the Bharat of ancient ages was not one land as it is today but was completely divided into two distinct regions by this sea-lane extending from the west to the east. The Vedic sages who compiled the Rig-Veda had not come in contact with the Southern region. That is why there is no mention of the south in their compositions. This hypothesis of the geologists has come to be accepted as true. Not only were the North and the South separated from each other but the very distribution of our homeland was something different from what it is today. Shri V. B. Ketkar in his paper read at the First Oriental Conference held in Poona in the year 1919 categorically observes;—

'Proved on astronomical evidence and Puranic accounts that Rajputana and the Gangetic seas, nearly separating the Jambudwipa (Southern India), from the Punjab and the Himalayas, disappeared seven thousand and five hundred years B.C. by the upheaval partly volcanic and partly seismic of their beds.'

Another author Shri D.R. Wadia in his *Geology of India* has also endorsed this theory. The *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (11th edition) has very interesting account in this connection which deserves notice.

It has therefore to be confessed that the researches of the geologists agree well with the evidence of the conditions in the Rig-Vedic times as recorded by eye-witnesses in their Vedic hymns. If some indirect references are being admitted arrived at after intensive research of geologists, which are based on more exact and convincing data, ought to be recognised as stronger proofs. Dr. Das on the strength of the evidence, the Rig-Veda, Avesta, geological findings, the comparative study of ancient, and, may be, possibly contemporary or post-Vedic cultures of Sumer, Chaldea, Asia Minor, etc. and the science of ethnology, has come to the following conclusions:—

'(1) Down to the Pleistocene epoch and even later, Sapta-Sindhu, as the ancient Punjab used to be called, was entirely cut off from Southern India by the sea which covered modern Rajputana and extended as far as East Assam. An arm of the sea, ran up the present lower valley of the Indus to the point where she was joined by her tributaries. Thus there were three seas, on the three sides of the Sapta-Sindhu. There was another sea towards the north, below the confines of modern Turkistan, extending as far north as the Arctic Ocean, and as far west as the Black Sea, which disappeared in comparatively recent times leaving the Black Sea, the Caspian Sea, the Sea of Aral, and the Lake Balkash as its remnants and converting its shallow beds into steppes. There was another Asiatic Mediterranean to the east of Turkistan which also disappeared in comparatively recent times leaving Lake Labour as its remnant. These four seas round about the

Sapta-Sindhu have been distinctly mentioned in the Rig-Veda thereby proving its hoary antiquity which goes back to the Pleistocene or post-Pleistocene epoch.

The Puranic legend of Agastya sipping up the ocean dry and depressing the high peak of the Vindhya to enable him to go to the Southern Peninsula strongly support and corroborate this view. There can be no doubt that the Rajputana sea existed in Rig-Veda times barring the progress of the Aryas southwards.

(2) Sapta-Sindhu has been admitted by geologists to be the earliest life-producing region in the whole of Bharat where the evolution of animal life took place in continuous succession until man was created. As the region was peopled by the Aryas from time immemorial, they came to regard it as their original cradle. The southern continent was peopled by different families of human beings of which the Kolarians and the Dravidians are the remnants.

(3) The upheaval of the bed of the Rajputana sea and the submergence of the Southern continent in post Rig-Vedic times probably caused a heavy flood in Sapta-Sindhu by the displacement of the vast volumes of its waters which is known as Manu's flood. The stupendous mass of the vapours generated by the drives of the flood-water was probably carried northward and precipitated over the Himalaya and Airyana Vaejo as snow which destroyed the latter region and compelled Yima and his people to migrate northwards and settle down in the Arctic region which in the inter-glacial period possessed a congenial climate and was tenanted by human beings. This migration of a branch of the Aryans to the Arctic region in a remote age which was however subsequent to the Rig-Vedic times, indirectly proves the hoary antiquity of the race. The Rig-Vedic Aryans never emigrated to nor came from the Arctic region as there is not even the shadow of such emigration in the Rig-Veda.

(4) The climate of Sapta-Sindhu had originally been cold which in a later age was changed into temperate and hot in consequence of the disappearance of the Rajputana sea and the creation of the vast tract of land desert in its place. The

change, however, was probably gradual. The year is first called Hima, then Hemant, and lastly Sharad in the Rig-Veda, marking its gradual change. The total disappearance of this sea as well as the sea over the Gangetic trough made the climate hot, diminished the quantity of rainfall in the Punjab, thereby causing glaciers in the lower ranges of the Himalayas to disappear, and attenuated the Saraswati and the Drishadvati into struggling and insignificant streams as they are at present. The Saraswati was, however a mighty river in ancient Sapta-Sindhu flooding her valley in the rainy season and had a perennial flow of water in her bed, probably fed by the glaciers at her source.

(5) The dark-skinned Dasas and Dasyus mentioned in the Rig-Veda were not the people of Kolarian and the Dravidian races but they were either the dark nomadic Aryan savages, the remnant of the race on its onward march towards progress or the non-sacrificing Aryan tribes who did not subscribe to the orthodox Vedic faith and accept the Vedic Gods and hence were put down as blacks to depict their character.

(6) There was an Aryan tribe in Sapta-Sindhu called the Panis who were merchants and traded both by land and by sea, but they were a greedy and avaricious people bent only upon amassing wealth by means fair and foul. This abominable character of the Panis, coupled with the fact that they did not subscribe to the Vedic faith or perform the Vedic sacrifice made them highly unpopular and despised. Some of them were so fiercely persecuted by the combined Vedic Aryan clans that they were compelled to leave Sapta-Sindhu in three ships for other countries, where they settled as traders and mariners.

(7) It would thus appear that Europe was not the original cradle of the Aryan race, nor was the Arctic region, when it was habitable and possessed congenial climate, verging upon perpetual spring in an inter-glacial epoch. Mr. Tilak thinks that there are internal evidences in the Rig-Veda which go to prove the Arctic cradle of the Aryans but I have examined his arguments and found them unconvincing. The evidence to be found in the Zend Avesta of an Aryan emigra-

tion to the Arctic region in early times does not prove that this region was their original cradle or that Airyana Vaejo was situated therein. This emigration took place long after the Rig-Vedic times in an inter-glacial epoch, when the Arctic region was habitable. As regards my calculation of the age of the oldest hymns of the Rig-Vedic which I have set down to the Pleistocene or at any rate to the post-Pleistocene epoch I am afraid that Vedic scholars will accuse me of roaming wildly but if the geological deductions are found to be correct, my calculations, which are based on them cannot be wrong. They will either stand or fall with them. The Rig-Vedic civilisation had its beginning in Sapta-Sindhu about twenty-five thousand years ago and was at its height probably in the seventh millennium before Christ when most of the hymns were composed and when there still existed a sea or an arm of the Arabian sea in Rajputana.'

This whole theory of Dr. Das has been built upon mainly some references from the Rig-Veda strongly supported by the modern geological evidence. His greatest argument and strongest point is the river Saraswati which has been described in all her aspects and is said to have met the sea. It is therefore a very shaky theory in as much as, if the evidence of geology on which he relies is contradicted or challenged by another set of geological findings, Dr. Das' arguments will totter down. So also if the evidence of the existence of the river Saraswati and her course running down to the seas is shown to be something else than what he imagines, the structure of his whole theory will collapse like a pack of cards.

This theory of Dr. Das has already come under a heavy fire from Vedic scholars, the chief among them being Prof. Kshetrendranath Chattopadhyaya, Shri Amiyakumar Chakravarty, and Mahamahopadhyaya Krishnashastri Ghule.

Prof. Chattopadhyaya raises a fundamental objection against Dr. Das' theory that 'the Rig-Vedic civilisation seems to belong to the Iron Age; but the Rajputana sea had long back dried up before the beginning of this age.' And therefore according to him the argument of the Saraswati flowing in the Rajputana sea is almost baseless. Prof. Chattopadhyaya,

however, has not, it seems, before he raised this objection considered one truth, that the supposed division of ages and their periods differ according to different continents and races. More particularly it is very difficult to show that the Rig-Vedic civilisation was an Iron-age civilisation. Dr. Das only says that the oldest hymns of the Rig-Veda were composed in an age in which there was the sea where there is Rajputana desert now. He has never said that the whole of the Rig-Veda was written at a time in a particular epoch. Dr. Das agrees with the well settled and generally accepted fact that thousands of years must have elapsed between the compositions of the oldest and the latest hymns. In Prof. Chattopadhyaya's criticism, it appears that he holds at least for the sake of his objection against the theory of Dr. Das that the whole of the Rig-Veda was composed at a time which is not the case.

Shri Chakravarty argues that even in the present age, the place where the Saraswati is supposed to have disappeared in the deserts is called 'Vinashan'. The very word 'Vinashan' according to him, suggests that the Vedic river must have been running further down the place, the 'Vinashan', where she has disappeared. If the river had poured in the sea at the place in the desert, then there was no propriety in calling the place 'Vinashan' at all. He further argues that in a description in the Shalya Parva of Mahabharat of the pilgrimage of Balaram, there is a long list of holy places on the banks of the river Saraswati which he visited from this 'Vinashan', right up to the shores of the Arabian sea. That clearly shows that the river Saraswati coming down from the Punjab poured her waters in the Arabian sea, which completely renders Dr. Das' theory as absurd.

Shri Chakravarty has taken the support of the word 'Vinashan', which is of post-Vedic use and meaning, and hence that will not prove anything in regard to the facts of the Vedic times. A word which came in parlance after the Vedic times cannot prove the place referred to in the Rig-Veda. Dr. Das argues the case of the Rajputana sea on the basis of geological investigations and not the Rig-Vedic references

to names of places. If the science of geology asserts that there was a sea in the Rajputana bed of to-day, how can we contradict this scientific fact by some literary evidence? Moreover in our opinion it is not so absurd as Prof. Chakravarty thinks in calling the place where the river disappeared as 'Vinashan'. It is neither very necessary to assume that the river must have run down further than this place 'Vinashan', for it may be that the name came to be coined to commemorate both the events the disappearance of the sea as well as the end of the river.

The theory of Dr. Das suffers also from the fallacy of what is called 'Anyonyashraya'—or the fallacy of reciprocal dependence. He first decides that the Aryas were the inhabitants of the Punjab on the strength of the references to the river Saraswati in the Rig-Veda. This Saraswati was in the Punjab according to him because the Rig-Vedic people belonged to the Punjab or what he calls the Sapta-Sindhu. This is where we say he begs the question. But if there is no other river Saraswati in Bharat, which else, but the Punjab river can be assumed to be the Saraswati mentioned in the Vedas.

Now it will be remembered that Dr. Das also does not hold that only the region of the Punjab was the Sapta-Sindhu of the Vedic times. He has asserted that Sapta-Sindhu which included the Punjab, the Kashmir, Bahlik, Gandhar and Baluchistan and the region at the western base of the Himalaya mountain was the cradle of the Vedic Aryas. The search for the Saraswati must, therefore, be made in this above-mentioned region of the Sapta-Sindhu only.

There is a mention of one river in the Avesta called the Harraketi which was for some time supposed to be the Vedic Saraswati by some scholars. But that notion has now been abandoned and the search still continues in the region of the Punjab alone.

Mahamahopadhyaya Ghule has analysed minutely the theory of Dr. Das and disproved it in all its details. The objections of this great Vedic scholar against Dr. Das in short are as follows: He says:—

'That the Rig-Veda was composed in the region of the Punjab is merely hypothetical. The truth is the Vedic Aryas reached the Punjab from some unknown place. On their way in search of a home they must have made a number of habitations. In each place they gave familiar and pet names to the rivers which they came across in their wanderings and campings. These names were borrowed by them from the book of the Rig-Veda whole of which was complete in their memories. Once we assume so much in this regard and then consider the hymns on the river Saraswati, it will become apparent that this Saraswati and in fact all other post-Vedic names are not of the rivers on this globe but of those in the divine sky. At least in certain places in the Rig-Veda the word 'samudra' means the 'Antariksha', the atmosphere, the middle region between earth and heaven. This suggestion is accepted by Western scholars also. There are a number of descriptions in the literature of the Aryas of the heavenly waters and divine rivers in the skies. There are mountains and hills also in the middle space above where the sun-rise and sun-set, darkness and clouds are described. If then we suppose even figuratively that there are mountains, seas, and rivers in the space what is the objection in locating this river Saraswati in the skies? It is necessary to understand the consistency of the Vedic hymns to presuppose this river as a heavenly or a spacial one. The verse which Dr. Das quotes has also to be interpreted in this sense only. The Vedic sage prays in categorical expressions soliciting the river to come down to him from the heaven through the tall mountains right up to the sacrificial place. How is it possible for the river to come from the heaven unless she belonged to the skies. In the third verse the river is described as 'paravataghni'—breaking the tops of mountains—by the lashing of her waves. This meaningful expression has not been understood by the Western scholars. Dr. Pran Nath has gone to the Egyptian legends and history to explain the word. He says that it means the people belonging to the region 'Para'. But that is absurd. To understand the word, we must look to two other words 'Paravat' and 'Arvavat' from the Rig-Veda. And then

the meaning becomes clear for 'Paravat' means, belonging to the other half of the hemisphere or beyond the horizon, those who stay in the other half beyond the horizon, namely, the demons. Thus the word means the river that destroys the demons. In this sense the word does not fit in with the descriptions of the Punjab river, so well as it does, if we suppose her to be belonging to the skies.

"The Saraswati is called "Hiranyavartini" and "Vritraghni". Vritra means darkness and therefore the river Saraswati has to be given a place in the heaven where she destroys the darkness. There are a number of descriptions of heavenly waters destroying the darkness and rescuing the Sun and Moon and revealing them to us. The river Saraswati has been given the epithets such as "Trishadhstha", "Sindhumata", "Marutsakha", etc. She is also called "Paviravi-Kanya", meaning the daughter of the "lightning". Saraswati is also considered to be the presiding deity of "Speech", that is intelligence and learning. It was on this account that the Western scholars and Tilak also consider her to be the Divine river. For all these reasons the Saraswati in the Rig-Veda should be taken not as the river in the Punjab but an inter-spacial river between the earth and heaven. With this hypothesis the fact that there are many rivers which have the same names could be well explained as the Aryas gave their Vedic pet-names of the rivers to all those which they came across in their wanderings till they reached this land. Thus the problem of two or more rivers having the same names can be very well solved.'

While we bow down to the great learning and the method of the Vedic research adopted by Mahamahopadhyaya Ghule, we have to state our disagreement with some of his views on the Vedic problems. Ghule has at one stroke of pen given a verdict that the whole of the Rig-Veda is an allegory on the astronomical events and disposed off all the questions arising in our modern research. It is amusing to note that in his view the Vedic sages like 'Diti' and the 'Aditi' are no persons with human form and flesh but merely inter-spacial planets and the luminary bodies. Even the 'Dashrajna' (War of the ten kings) which has been the most debated event, full of

scholarly speculations, has been written off by this learned Vedic scholar as merely a phenomenon pertaining to some very significant happenings in the inter-space above. This view of the learned pandit is however not at all convincing. In this fashion any event in history can be represented as an allegory depicting some inter-spacial phenomenon. We do not concur with this view and reject it as purely imaginary. It has become an adamant insistence of this great Vedic pandit to interpret every word in the Rig-Veda in the terms of astronomy. For instance, if the word Arya is pronounced, he would at once refer to some astronomical event to explain its meaning. He has however ignored the fact that the allegories and metaphors come only after some factual events. It seldom happens that first an allegory or a figure of speech takes root and then its actual counterpart comes to breathe. Whatever interpretations we may now put on the word 'Vritra' it has to be accepted that originally it meant some substantial and existing object, or idea, here particularly, darkness; and then on that basis all other notions and speculations are woven. It has curiously enough become as equally an obstinate insistence of the western scholars to explain the clash between the Vritra and Indra only as an event transpiring between the darkness of the night or the clouds and the rising of the Sun. But who can say that in all places Vritra means only darkness! There are innumerable places in the Rig-Veda where the words occur and in some particular instances the terms have necessarily to be understood and explained in the sense of metaphysical or spiritual significance. Vritra is indeed declared by the Vedic sages as an incarnation of darkness, but that is an independent conception. If the dark night is to be understood as the Vritra, how shall we explain the expressions 'Vritra fell into darkness' or that 'Indra hurled him into darkness'?

Another reputed Vedic scholar Shri Aprabuddha interprets the word in such places in its higher metaphysical sense and the interpretation is also very satisfactory in as much as it is consistent with the high ideal place which the Vedic sages have accorded to the Goddess Saraswati. Vritra according to him

is the dark passions and temptations in the mind of man which obstruct his progress towards truth, good and the beautiful. It indicates that the evil desires or temptations cause the fall of man from right action. Vritra is called the 'Ahi'—that is a serpent. Aprabuddha says: 'A serpent is with all races of human beings a symbol of the enemy of man that roams at large and crawls to embrace man with death, very crooked in nature and subtle in movements. The evil that men do is also like the serpent. In this sense the symbolism is so apt to compare the evil desires and actions to a serpent.' The Saraswati is called the 'Vritraghni' rightly, as it is she, who wards off evil thoughts from the minds of men and keeps them on the path of virtue. That is quite in fitness of the high metaphysical conception which the Bharatiya mind has evolved round this Goddess of learning. It will be further remembered that the Rig-Vedic philosophers and poets always conceive of all things in their three aspects and fundamental forms, the 'Tridhatu', the physical, the metaphysical, and the divine and from that point of view, on the one hand, the river is a physical manifestation, the deity is the divine aspect of the same concept which presides over the good and the well-being of men. This river Saraswati is according to us a Bharatiya river.

Ghule Shastri has also endorsed the view that the Aryas migrated to India from some outside place. The Westerners are impatient to prove this very hypothesis that the Vedic people do not originally belong to this place but have come from some outside region. It is not a convincing logical argument first to presume that the Aryas were immigrants and then to try to explain so many inconsistencies. If for the only reason that the Saraswati is called 'Daityaghatini', she is to be taken as a divine river, then why should she be not understood as a purely physical river from the descriptions of her forceful current breaking the tops of hills and mountains? We have noted in the mantras above that the sages repeat their prayers that they may not have the misfortune to go away from the stream of the river as much as a 'child would not like to be away from the breasts of its mother'. How can

this very matter of fact verse be explained if we take the river to be a divine one? What would be the exact idea of the sage when he says that he should not have to go away from the stream of the river? In our opinion this very verse suggests the shaping and offing of the future catastrophe that was to overtake the Vedic people. They must have either noticed some signs of the physical revolution that was slowly coming over, the upheaval of the sea-bed, the shifting of the river current, etc., and therefore the poets earnestly pray that the calamity may not overcome them. In all views the river is beyond doubt a physical river of this earthly region in the Sapta-Sindhu itself. Do we not see even in the comparatively modern times a poet like Pandit Jagannath describing the Ganga as if she were a divine river. It would be wrong to conclude from his descriptions that his Ganga was a heavenly river. The allegorical description does not make the river less earthly and flowing with waters full to the brim!

Dr. Das has no doubt developed his thesis in a very convincing manner. The one great defect with him however is that he relies too much upon the investigations of a qualitative and not very conclusive science like Geology. This total reliance on geology has miserably forced Dr. Das to accept a variation of thousands of years in two editions of his self-same treatise. In his first edition of the Rig-Vedic culture, he determines the age to be beyond sixty thousand years on the presumption of the existence of the Rajputana sea; whereas in his second edition he had to bring down the period to twenty-seven thousand years before Christ. Similar is the fate of the theory of Tilak on account of its too much reliance on the science of geology. Tilak on the strength of the modest estimates of American Geologists accepts the period to be about ten thousand years before Christ. But the English Geologists assume the same geological phenomenon to have occurred eighty thousand years back. Who can say which one theory is finally true? Why should one theory be accepted and the other rejected? There is no convincing reply to the above questions. Under such conditions of conflicting views amongst the geologists it must be provisionally held that this

science is not competent enough to supply the missing links. What most it does, is to give us an order of the evolution or a sequence of the physical revolutions which have changed the shape of the globe and the life of man on it.

There is however no dispute about one fact which Dr. Das has rightly asserted that there is no evidence of the Aryas having ever come here from some other part of the globe. It is unnatural and inexplicable that whereas the Indo-Iranians have not forgotten their migration from the original home, there is no recollection on the part of the Vedic Aryas of their home-land! It does not sound logical or natural to suggest that they forgot to make mention of their lost or abandoned original home or that they had forgotten the very fact. These Vedic sages who love their Sindhu and Saraswati with affection as sincere and intense as that of children, and who become restless at even the thought of having to move away from the banks of their mother-rivers or that their mother-rivers might some day forsake them, were indeed the original inhabitants of this very land—the Sapta-Sindhu. This was their original home, and there is no question of their having come from any other place. Hindusthan was indeed their cradle as it was of the human species that belonged to the northern territory or the upper half of this earth which was at some time divided and separated from the southern hemisphere by the Mediterranean Sea running round the globe. It was here in the Sapta-Sindhu on the mountain Mujuwan that they had discovered their Soma. It was in this their home-land where they came to attain the revelation and realisation of the 'divinity'.

The only question that remains now is to explain the theory of the Arctic region, the probable allusions to it and the phenomenon peculiar to it, which it is imagined, we come across in the Rig-Veda. It must be said at the outset that mere resemblance to certain alleged descriptions cannot establish that the Arctic region was the original home of the Aryas. In the age of the Sapta-Brahman that is about 2,900 years before Christ the Bharatiya or the post-Vedic Hindu civilisation had extended right over the middle Asia. The

Bharatiya dynasties like the Bahliks were ruling or dominating over countries as far as and including Iran. It should not be difficult to imagine that the heroic worshippers of the Mighty God Indra could not have in the age of the height of their prowess and conquest gone right upto the Arctic regions and established their colonies in those places of perpetual spring.

It is now an admitted fact that there is an impress of the Arya culture and civilisation on the civilisations of human races right from Peru to Mexico, and from Kamaschataka to Marilin islands, which must have obviously been the result of the conquest of humanity by the Vedic civilisation. Do we not see that these very Hindus, the people born in this land under the inspiration of the Enlightened one went out to spread the message of Buddhism to all the directions and successfully converted the humanity in the whole of the South-East Asia and many countries of the Central Asia to their faith and the eightfold path preached by the Buddha? Why is it considered impossible that still farther back in the history the Vedic ancestors of the same Hindu race, who were definitely more aggressive and had greater will and power to conquer, could not have gone right up to the Arctic regions which were very congenial to human habitation? It is unfortunate that we Bharatiyas in our present state of mind should not be able even to appreciate this will and power of our ancestors to conquer the world.

It is perfectly right to raise a question why the Aryas who had gone to the Arctic regions abandoned their colonies and returned back to their home-land? The answer is also very easy to imagine, especially when we have so many instances in history of the last thousands of years why a particular conquering race abandons its conquered countries and releases the grip over the subdued people and returns back! The causes for such an occurrence are indeed many and multifarious. The Romans who had held England under their sway, had to return back for the reasons of difficulties, disorders, and danger in their own home-land in spite of the fact that the then people of England prayed them to stay on. The English recently had to liquidate their Eastern Empire

and go back for some other reasons well-known to the present generation. Whatever may be the reasons, it is quite a conceivable idea that a people may have to abandon a land and return to their homes which may be in danger. It should be remembered that the 'Soma' which was available in abundance in the Rig-Vedic age became scarce after the descent of the glacial epoch. In the pages of the Avesta itself, there is evidence that the plant had become almost a rarity. This disappearance of the plant is an indication of a great physical revolution which must have over-taken the globe during this period between the Rig-Veda and the Avesta.

It is an undisputed fact that not a single rite or routine of the Vedic Aryas could be performed without the use of this plant 'Soma'. The 'Soma' was an indispensable factor in the religious life of the Vedic people. It is but natural that they would endeavour their level best to preserve and grow it at all costs. Such being the case when we see that the plant became rare day-by-day and ultimately it disappeared, we have to imagine that this miracle happened on account of some physical phenomenon beyond human control. This physical revolution according to us was the descent of the snows in the glacial epoch. The abundance of the plant and its sudden disappearance marks the Rig-Vedic age and the post-Rig-Vedic period. This also helps us to lay down a general proposition that the descent of the glacial epoch came after the Rig-Veda and before the Avesta. The physical revolution which this glacial descent introduced in the Arctic region compelled the Aryas to abandon their Arctic habitations and return to their home-land. Our difference with the theory of Tilak is only this much that we do not hold that the Aryas descended or migrated from the Arctic region. On the descent of the glacial snows when Soma was lost and life became impossible, they returned home from their colonies in the Arctic region to the Sapta-Sindhu. This also absolves the civilised Aryas of any possible charge of being so ungrateful or as forgetful of their original home-land.

In conclusion, the people whose life and history are seen reflected in the literature that is known as the Rig-Veda were

the people, born on the banks of the rivers Sindhu and Saraswati and brought upon their waters. This Bharat is beyond doubt their original home and motherland. Even the assumption of the theory of the Arctic region being sometime a habitation of the Vedic Aryas does not affect this fundamental truth in any way. If those who attack the Arctic theory simply for the reason that it precludes the claim of Bharat being the home-land of the Aryas, read the original thesis of Tilak quietly in between the times, they will be convinced that it does not in fact very much disturb the fundamental fact asserted by us above that the Sapta-Sindhu is the original home of the Aryas.

CHAPTER VI

THE DIVINE ORIGIN OF THE VEDAS

WE have so far examined how much baseless are some of the current conceptions about our ancient ancestors, the Vedic people, whose life is reflected in the Rig-Veda. These wrong speculations set afloat by some Western scholars whether with or without the alleged ulterior motives, definitely unwarranted by tradition, or even on pure scientific, philological and historical grounds, and (which were) unfortunately accepted blindly by some of our own great pandits, have now come to be thoroughly exploded. We have seen for instance how the word 'Arya' has nothing to do with the term 'Aryan' coined by the Western scholars in the last century, the Vedic term being purely a qualitative one and not a distinguishing race-name. So also the term 'Dasyu' and 'Asura' are adjectives showing the qualities and characteristics of the particular people and not their race labels. Nothing like the alleged 'Dravid' civilisation can be inferred to have existed apart from and opposed to the Vedic civilisation from the evidence available in the Rig-Veda, either before or after it. According to Tilak this Vedic civilisation had acquired almost its perfect shape and form before the glacial epoch. It logically follows that all other civilisations which evince some signs of resemblance must have borrowed largely from this earlier Vedic civilisation. But this is precisely the fact which the Western mind whether scholarly or lay, is not prepared to accept as it offends his sense of pride for the Christ and the Christianity which are thereby reduced to very insignificant position in the history of the human race. Whether it is liked by them or not, and whether the disciples of these Western scholars agree or not an independent observer cannot fail to notice the truth and admit the theory. Even though the thesis of Dr. Avinash Chandra Das does not take the grip of the reader because of its excessive reliance on the uncertain science of geology, the main proposition that the original home of the Vedic Aryas was the Sapta-Sindhu is

not at all shaken. This we have shown in the preceding chapter.

There are indeed places in the Vedic literature which positively indicate that the Vedic Aryas must have resided at some period in the Arctic regions. The long dawns, their whirling or spinning round and round, the long nights and days, the aurora of the dawn, etc. etc., are indeed very peculiar phenomena which could be experienced only in the Arctic regions. Hence it has to be admitted that the people who witnessed these and recorded their personal experiences must have stayed or at least visited the region. This thesis of Tilak asserts only so much that the Vedic people must have stayed in the Arctic region. It does not necessarily compel us to accept the region as their original home. The intense affinity of the Vedic people for Bharat, its rivers, and all that, as well as the complete absence of any reference to any other home-land, lost, or abandoned in the past, do not leave any alternative but to accept that Bharat was the original home of the Vedic Aryas. We have already answered the question as to why they abandoned this place if they had once occupied it. Thus agreeing with the theory of Tilak broadly, we assert that the original home of the Vedic Aryas was the Sapta-Sindhu.

Let us now turn our attention to the glimpses which we get from the great book on the life of the people as such, their thoughts and practices, their relations *vis-a-vis* the society, the State, and God, the codes which governed their social and domestic behaviours, etc., etc. Before we gather these glimpses, it is necessary to understand correctly one basic concept of the Vedic people, namely, that the Vedas are a divine revelation and not the handiwork of human authorship. It is the undisputed belief of the Hindus that the Vedas were not composed by man but revealed by the impersonal divine power which presides over 'all that is'.

The very first surprise, almost a miracle in the histories of literatures of the world, that greets an inquisitive scholar or student at the very portals of this great literary mansion that Veda is, the absolutely chaste text without a single variation or alternative version, even so small as a comma or an accent,

with the unchangeable form and phone of every syllable that makes the whole Veda. The unique adherence to tradition in regard to maintaining the purity of accent and the incorruptibility of a word or part of it, has been seen nowhere, not even in the later literature of the Hindus, much less so in the global sphere of the world's literary compositions. Ramayan, Mahabharat, the Smritis, the Puranas, the Dharma-Sutras, the Vedant Sutras, all these and many others are indeed of immense value and authority in the Hindu view; but none of them has been prescribed to be committed to memory; nor has there been so scrupulousness observed in regard to the chastity of their words and expressions, their substance and sounds. There does not seem to be any rule or regulation in regard to all this vast ocean of literature whether it should be committed to memory in one particular form and order or other, or whether the accents should be according to some particular codes and conventions. Nor has there been any other instance where such a strictness is seen to have been observed as in the case of the Vedas.

The Vedas present a peculiar and unique instance of its own kind. Since the very days when the literature was revealed, there seems to have been an incorruptible code of accents, phonetics, forms and sequence which has been handed over from generation to generation right up to the present times. The Vedas are otherwise called 'Anushravas,' meaning that they have to be recited as exactly as they are delivered by the Guru to the disciple. This is the method in which the Vedas were taught by the teacher to the student from mouth to mouth. The Guru recites, which the disciple listens to and then repeats the text. Thus was the whole of the Veda being delivered to the disciple directly from the mouth of the teacher to the ears of the student. There is a method and a system of recitation with accents which the Guru himself demonstrated to the disciple. Thus was the Vedic lore acquired by the disciple directly; and in his turn the disciple when he attained the Guruship imparted it to his disciples. This was what is known as the acquisition and preservation of the Vedic learning.

How ancient this traditional system of imparting the Vedic lore by the teacher to the student was, can be shown from the Vedas themselves. The Vedas are described to have been created by the 'Brahmadeo' the creator himself, along with all other objects in the universe. The Brahmadeo himself acquired the Vedas from the Almighty in the traditional

“यो वै ब्रह्माणं विदधाति पूर्वं यो वै वेदांश्च प्रहिणोति तस्मै ।”

manner of teacher to the student. The Veda says: 'He who revealed the Vedas to the Brahmadeo, He who created first the Brahmadeo...etc.' It is the conventional belief of the Hindus that the Almighty God created the Brahmadeo first of all and revealed the Vedas to him. This suggests merely that the Brahmadeo also secured the knowledge of the Vedas in the usual tradition from his Guru. In the ultimate analysis there is no difference between the Vedas and the Almighty God since they are a manifestation of Godhood in the form of words. Even to an atheist this singular fact that the Vedas were imparted from mouth to mouth and were therefore required to be committed to memory strikes as something unique and miraculous. This strange insistence of knowing and preserving the Vedas in this particular manner only has indeed been such a unique achievement of the Bharatiya people that finds no parallel in the history of the world. It is true that in a society unacquainted with the art of printing or writing the only natural course of preserving its sacred literature would have to be to commit it to memory. But that was not the case of the Vedic society. It has now become an established fact that the Vedic people must have been thoroughly acquainted with the art of writing right from or ever since the unknown beginnings of the Rig-Vedic age. In spite of the knowledge of the art of writing it was the insistence and accepted convention of the Vedic people to know the Vedas by memorising them, with all the peculiar system of accents and sounds. Ever since the ancient times right till the latest generations, though the Bharatiyas on one side rendered into hand-written manuscripts all the innumerable books of knowledge, arts, sciences, poetry, dramas, etc., yet never has there been noted a single attempt in this vast land of

Bharatwarsha of reducing to writing the texts of the Vedas. This astonishing attitude of the Bharatiyas towards the Vedas of not putting them into a manuscript form even though they knew the art of writing, and despite the fact that they have recorded all their sundry knowledge in manuscripts, has evoked immense surprise and admiration of the Western scholars. That the very people who kept alive all other types of literatures by transcribing them into inscriptions, engravings on metals or scratching them on palm leaves, should for the sake of preserving the chastity of the Vedic lore resort to only memory, is an astounding fact indeed. What must be the special reason for this? Could it not be as Professor Benn observes that the Vedic word according to the Bharatiya belief is not only full of meaning but full of potency too? The Vedic words have a live power which can only be transmitted by mouth to mouth and not by such dead mediums as mud, stone, leaves, metals or paper, for, these cannot become the proper conducting medium of the potent power which they possessed in their own accent and sound only. To preserve the purity of the Vedic words to keep alive the burning process in the unchanging accents and sounds, it became necessary to employ only the medium of the powerful memories of righteous human beings, who had purified their bodies and minds by performance of penance, and had thus made themselves capable of accomplishing the greatest feat of memorising and retention.

These Vedic people in the first place counted the contents of the Veda from the first to the last word and put them into correct measures and orders. This mould or pattern or order is called by them in their technical term the 'Vyuha' or the 'Vikruti'. The book which prescribes the 'Vyuha' system is called the 'Charan-Vyuha'. This book of the 'Charan-Vyuha' was composed by the sage Shaunak in the year 1,200 B.C. The 'Vikruti-valli' a volume dealing with the 'Vikrutis' was written by the sage Vyadi at about the same time as the 'Charan-Vyuha'. The word 'Charan' means modulation and the 'Charan-Vyuha' therefore indicates the system or the modes of modulations. These two are the most effective

devices devised by human genius for the preservation of the syllables, their sounds, and the total substance of the Vedic texts. To protect the Vedic literature from interpolations and adulterations it was necessary to put into tight and measured moulds. The genius who first devised this faultless pattern was Katyayan. If he is the son of the great sage Yajna-Valkya then he must surely belong to an age about 2,400 years before Christ according to Shri Aprabuddha. In their first attempt to introduce the ways and means for the preservation of the Rig-Veda it was divided into Mandals, Suktas, Ashtakas, Vargas, Anuvakas, Khand, Kanda, Prashna, Chanda, etc. The prose part of the Veda was accounted into sections of fifty words each. Thus even the total number of words were also counted. The Vedic mantras have a function and use in the ritual of the Vedic sacrifice. That itself helped the preservation of the lore. But further the mantras were arranged into combinations of words in particular order and each arrangement itself was committed to memory. Thus there were Brahmanas who knew to recite the Vedas by heart in a particular order or arrangements of its words. This tradition of orders and arrangements of the Vedic texts was scrupulously preserved by distinct families of Brahmanas from generation to generation. This is indeed a marvellous device to bind and bundle the words of the Vedic texts in a manner that not one syllable or even an accent could be changed by any one. If it was done, it could be detected by the checks which other orders and arrangements would operate. It was due to this arrangement that we are in a position to listen to the Vedic recitation of the mantras in exactly the same form and phones and accents in any part of the country separated by thousands of miles in exactly the same as they were recited thousand years back. These particular forms or orders of Vedic recitation are called the 'Vikrutis', which are in total eight in

जटा माला शिखा रेखा ध्वजो दण्डो रथो घनः ।

अष्टौ विकृतयः प्रोक्ताः क्रमपूर्वा मनीषिभिः ॥

number. They are: (1) Jata, (2) Mala, (3) Shika, (4) Rekha, (5) Dhawaja, (6) Danda, (7) Ratha and (8) Ghana. When a

Brahman could recite the Vedas in all these eight orders or arrangements, then only was he recognised as a 'Ghanant-Vedic', meaning one who has gone to the end of and mastered the eight modes of recitations. This is indeed so stupendous a task even to imagine; to accomplish it completely, a whole long life would all be occupied in first committing to memory the texts and then endeavouring to retain them in tact. And for what game or gain was all this to be done? The Brahman had no other ambition or occupation in life except to go on reciting the Vedas endlessly for their own sake. That hardly brought any prize or worldly prosperity. His whole life was a severe struggle against poverty. And yet generation after generation the Brahman came forward to do the arduous task without the least expectation of honour or gold. The Bharatiya social structure produced a class of Brahmana who devoted their whole lives in the study of the Vedas in this manner. The society placed the Brahmanas high above every one else in the social estimation.

It will now be realised that because of such a system which made any interpolations impossible that the Vedas have been preserved in their pristine form, through all the stress and strain of foreign invasions. There have been periods of unimaginable tyranny when thousands of Vedic Brahmanas were harassed, converted or killed. But those that survived were competent enough to revive the traditions and hand them over to their disciples, and thus save the Vedic lore.

To say the truth the Vedas are not a coherent piece of literature like the Mahabharat. The substance of the Rig-Veda is so discursive and disjointed that it is difficult to find any logical connection between two 'mantras' (verses) in the same hymn. Under the circumstances it has to be confessed that the word of the Vedas has a peculiar significance and strength of its own which the Vedic priests must have realised, that they tried all their best, even at the expense of their whole lives for the preservation of the word, the text of the Vedas, yes, the mere text and words, which made the Vedas, irrespective whether the Brahmana understood the meaning behind them or not.

The second peculiar feature of the Vedic literature is the system of accents with which the Vedic language is governed. Those who could not follow or pronounce this language of sixty-three or sixty-four syllables with its right accents were, as we have shown before, ridiculed as the 'Asura', 'Murdevas', 'Anasa', etc. This Vedic language is so regularised and perfected that it is impossible to imagine some foreign element of words or pronunciations could have got mixed into it. What a Western scholar has very rightly said that the self-sufficient and proud Brahman sect never borrowed anything from anybody seems to be very correct in regard to the language which he evolved in the Bharatvarsha.

The syllable 'ढ' occurs in the Rig-Veda. Some people imagine that this 'ढ' is borrowed by Sanskrit from the Dravid language and must be an independent consonant as it is in Marathi. But on closer and minute study of the Vedic alphabets and language it will be seen that this is not a borrowed syllable but an interchangeable alternative or a more developed pronunciation of the syllable 'ड' Da. The science of alphabets and their phones evolved by the Vedic people is a subject worth more detailed and devoted study as we shall show presently, that it is the original fountain source of almost all other systems of alphabets. In fact this peculiar character of words changing their meanings with the change of their accents is not any very special feature of the Vedic language as such. It is also observed in other ancient languages like the Greek and Latin, as also the modern ones like the English, the Marathi, etc. But the accents in the Vedic language are not so very superficial as to denote only different sounds but inherent in the words themselves which change the sense, the compound, the case, the tense and the connotation of the word. This is an exclusive and unique character of the Vedic 'swaras'. Following are some of the instances which will illustrate the above statement of ours:—

Take the word 'Apas'. When the accent is on the last syllable the meaning is 'skilled or proficient'. But this very word, when the accent is on the first syllable means 'action'. Take another word 'पोता' (Potā). When the last syllable is

'Udatta' accented then the word means 'the purifying Soma'; but when the first syllable is 'Udatta' (accented) it means the sage bearing the name. So also the word 'जूणि' (Jurni) means the worshipper or the Prayer-offerer when the first syllable is accented, but the same word will mean 'flame or ulka' if there is no accent and the word is plain.

The famous anecdote about the birth of the Vritrasura clearly illustrates the efficacy of accents in the Vedic language, and how their variation changes their meanings. Indra had killed 'Vishvarupa', a son of Twashta, the divine carpenter. The latter in grief and in revenge offered oblations to 'Dakshinagni', the Fire that presides over death. While offering the oblation he recited the 'mantra' 'Indra-shatro Vivardhasva'. (Indra-enemy grow).

“इन्द्रशत्रो विवर्धस्व”

Now it is common knowledge that the compound word 'Indrashatru' would either mean the enemy and killer of Indra, or Indra, the killer of his enemy, according to the emphasis on the syllables changing the structure of the compound, either as Bahuvrihi or a Tat-purush. The Twashta in his excitement uttered the words 'Indrashatru' with a wrong emphasis and accent which changed the sense into 'Indra the killer of his enemy' Thus was the Vritra—the son of Twashta done to death by Indra his enemy as a result of the prayers of his own father.

Such is the significance and efficacy of the accents of the Rig-Vedic words.

The Swaras have such an intrinsic connection in the structure of the Vedic words and the Vedic language, that no word is considered complete by itself unless it is expressed in the three measures of swaras, viz., the 'Udatta', 'Anudatta' and the 'Swarita'—meaning acute, grave and normal accents. The inestimable and intrinsic importance of the 'swaras' in the Vedic language can be realised when we note that an independent and exclusive science of 'Shiksha' as a section of Vedic learning had been evolved to impart correct knowledge and instructions in the technique of accents and sounds of the

Vedic Mantras. That chapter in the science of Vedic studies has actually put down the following as a rule: 'A mantra which is defective in accents of its syllables is a false mantra and can never express its correct sense. Not only this, but the utterance of such a faulty and incorrect mantra turns out into as hard a missile as a Vajra and destroys the host like a

“मन्त्रो हीनः स्वरतो वर्णतो वा मिथ्या प्रयुक्तो न तमर्थमाह ।

स वाग्बज्रो यजमानं हिनस्ति यथेन्द्रशत्रुः स्वरतोऽपराधात् ॥”

(Panineeya Shiksha)

boomrang.’ This has been illustrated by the anecdote cited above about the destruction of Vritra on account of uttering a word with wrong accent.

The third character of the Vedic mantras is that the words composing them must be recited in the same order in which they have been composed in the unchangeable structure of the mantra. The rule in this regard is: ‘The words must follow

नियतानुपूर्व्या नियतवाचो युक्तयो भवन्ति ।

the form and precedence as it has been in the original composition of the mantra.’ For instance take an expression like ‘Agnimeele Purohitam’. This must be pronounced and re-

अग्निमीळे पुरोहितम् ।

cited exactly as it is in the mantra. No syllable or word can be shifted from its place in the sentence. To our modern idea the meaning may not appear to change but to the strict Vedic authority that would exactly render the mantra not only completely inefficacious but harmful like the Vajra wrongly used.

It is said in common parlance that language follows the track of sense. However correct this may be in our common talk, in the case of the Vedic mantras this does not hold good. It is not the sense that decides the place and order of the words in a mantra. It is for all purposes the words, their accents and sounds which make a mantra. The order of words is called the ‘Anupurvi’ and it is this order of words in the mantra which is of primary importance in the Vedic

धियो योनः प्रबोदयात् ।

recitations. 'Dhiyo Yo nah prachodayat'—is a part of the well-known Gayatri mantra. But it is a Vedic mantra so long as the words come in the order and not in any other manner. Nor would any other expression conveying the same sense make it a Vedic mantra.

The fourth feature of the Vedic learning is the condition as to who can and who cannot study and recite the Vedas. The Vedas can be studied and recited by only a particular class of people whose bodies and minds have been qualified for such a revelation. This insistence does not and should not be misunderstood as suggesting the motive of depriving others of the Vedic knowledge. In fact it was the restless anxiety of the learned men of Bharat to impart as great and intensive practical knowledge of this world and life in it, that made them pour out their hard-earned wisdom, and rarely acquired spiritual experience, through those inexhaustible and innumerable volumes like the Mahabharat, the Puranas, and so on. No restraint or conditions were laid down in regard to the studies of these worldly lores and sciences. But very strict adherence to the conditions prescribed for the studies of the Vedas was demanded. What must have been the reason for this? There is indeed very convincing logic behind this apparent discrimination. The Vedas are a revealed lore. Their efficacy depends upon the correct accents and phones of the words and syllables. Only those whose bodies and minds are trained and tuned by penance and practice can become the instruments of the right articulation and symphony of the Vedic sounds. The body is assumed to be a live instrument on which the symphony of the Vedic mantras can be tuned and set in waves of sounds. Is it imagined that any dissipated body and a perverse mind can become a fit vehicle for such a rigorous task as of reciting faultlessly the 'mantras' with such a complex structure of measured and controlled accents in every syllable? If there be any one who believes that to be possible, let him try to recite only a single mantra in its proper accents, and emphasis, in its conventional cadence like the Brahman, who has been doing it in the same traditional manner for the last thousands of years. The secret is only a

brave soul who can with masterly self-restraint and contentment decide to undergo an endless penance of self-denial without sorrow or regrets away from the joys of life in utter seclusion and unadulterated devotion to the Great Revelation, the Vedas, becomes a fitting carriage and an unfailing trustee of the knowledge stored in that great sacred book of the Hindus.

These are some of the unique features and facets which greet an observer on the threshold of the monumental and eternal literature, the Vedas. It is indeed a miracle of a spectacle that this voluminous literature whose beginning is so old beyond memory or knowledge of man, as to be an unresolved riddle, a matter of pure conjectures, disputes among scholars, that it has been preserved by a class of priests who dedicated their whole lives in every generation, for how many millenniums nobody knows, only for the preservation with absolute purity and veracity of their Vedic lore by committing to memory every syllable and sentence with its pristine accent and order, without the slightest regard for any other worldly consideration of self or power and with a determined self-denial of all pleasures and passions, a parallel of which has not been noted in the history of mankind. It is cheap vulgarity to deride this class of priests as 'chanting frogs', or as 'ludicrous simpletons', betraying our incompetence and ingratitude even to properly judge their great devotion and sacrifice in the task of preservation of the most valuable source substance of the history, culture and civilisation of one of the most advanced branches of human society on earth that still survives, surely as a result of their efforts. This branch of the human kind has produced supermen in all walks of life and literature. Some of the metaphysicians, theologians, and the logicians going under different categories—the Samkhyas, Naiyayikas, etc., were divided so sharply in their views regarding the thoughts and theories of the unfathomable cause of this universe that they did not stop short of splitting a hair in hundredth part; but when the question of the Veda came everyone bowed down before it without an exception, in total acceptance of its sovereign and unchallengeable authority. This

is indeed a noumenon or phenomenon which should inspire deep thought and regard.

To one more concept about the Vedic literature, we shall turn now. The Vedas are a mountain of words. But these words are supposed to possess colour and shape, sound and scent of their own. For instance, in the Charan-Vyuha, the Rig-Veda is described in following terms:—

‘Of these four of them (the Vedas), what are the colour and shape of each? The Rig-Veda has eyes like the petals of a lotus; the graceful neck is divided in equal marks. He has curly hair, and moustach and white fair colour; the length of his body is two and half hand measures.’ This is in short the description of the symbolic or national physical body of Rig-Veda. The Yajur-Veda is described as having “blue eyes, thin waist, full neck, dimple chins, and the body of two and half hands length”; and he has two colours ruddy and black. The Sam-Veda is “bulky in form, with eyes shining like gold, with the whole face glowing like the Sun, fair in colour, four and half hands tall.” He moves in clean white clothes with a stick of Shami in his hand, wearing always garlands of flowers. The Sam-Veda is a strict observer of all the restraints and rules of life, cool and collected in mind, and as if a master of his senses and organs. Lastly, the Atharva-Veda is described to be a person of five hands in height, of dark colour, but as handsome as a blue lotus. The Atharva-Veda is a haughty, strong personality, assuming any form as desired. The cause of this universe as well as its preserver, everready to undertake any mean jobs, but devoted to the study of his sectional lore, he (Atharva-Veda as personified), is said to be very keen in intellect.

“The Rig-Veda belongs to the Atri-family; his deity is Soma; and his meter is the Gayatri; Yajur-Veda belongs to the Kashyap family his deity is Indra and the meter is Trishtup. Sam-Veda hails from the Bharadwaja family; he has Rudra as his deity and his meter is Jagati. The Atharva-Veda has Vaitanasa Gotra, that is family ancestry, and his deity is Brahma; his meter is Anushtup.

“The person who knows the Vedas, their names, forms, colours, gotras, measures, deities and their meters, may be without any learning but he will get the knowledge; he will secure a better birth and recollection of the past life; he will certainly acquire Vedic lore in all his future lives; he is bound to get the good fruit of vows and orders without undergoing them actually; he can surely gather the merit of celibacy without being a celibate.” Such is the description of the Vedas and

मूलम्:—“य इमे चत्वारस्तेषां एकैकस्य कीदृशं रूपं वर्णविधोच्यते । ऋग्वेदः पञ्चपत्राक्षः सुविभक्तप्रीवः कुञ्चितकेशश्मश्रुः श्वेतवर्णो वर्णेन कीर्तितं प्रमाणं तावन्तिष्ठान्वितस्तीः पञ्च यजुर्वेदः पिगाक्षः कृशमध्यस्थूलगलकपोलस्तान्नवर्णः कृष्णवर्णो वा प्रादेशमात्रः षड्दीर्घत्वेन; सामवेदो नित्यं स्रग्वी सुप्रयतः शुचिवासः शमी दान्तो बृहच्छरीरः शमी दण्डी क्वातरनयन आदित्यवर्णो वर्णेन नवारालीमात्रः; अथर्ववेदस्तीक्ष्णः प्रचण्डः कामरूप विश्वकर्ता क्षुद्रकर्मा स्वशास्त्राध्यायी प्राज्ञश्च महानीलोत्पलवर्णो वर्णेन दशारालीमात्रः ।”

भाष्यम्:—“अथ वेदानां गोत्रदेवता छंदांस्याह । ऋग्वेदस्य आत्रेयसगोत्रम् । आत्रेयाः सगोत्राः समानगोत्रा यस्य तत् । अत्रिगोत्र ऋग्वेद इत्यर्थः । सोमदैवत्यं सोमः देवता यस्य तत् । गायत्री छंदो यस्य तत् । एवं अत्रेऽपि व्याख्यातव्यम् । अथ यजुर्वेदस्य काश्यपगोत्रं इन्द्रदैवत्यं त्रिष्टुप्छंदः । अथ सामवेदस्य भारद्वाजसगोत्रं रुद्र दैवत्यं जगती छंदः । अथर्ववेदस्य वैतानसगोत्रं ब्रह्म दैवत्यं अनुष्टुप् छंदः ।”

मूलम्:—“य इदं वेदानां नामरूपगोत्रप्रमाणच्छंदो दैवतवर्णं वर्णयति । अविद्यो लभते विद्यां जातिस्मरोऽथ जायते जन्मजन्म वेदपारगो भवत्यव्रती व्रती भद्ल्य ब्रह्मचारी ब्रह्मचारी भवति ।”

(Charanawyooha)

the merits which knowledge of them bring to the knower. It is not possible to brush aside all this as meaningless words since it is connected with the mantras and the actual fruit they secure for the person who knows them.

Once we take a broad view of all these aspects of the Vedic lore and think of the vast and multiple purposes and objects which that lore has behind and before it, it becomes difficult, ridiculous to imagine as some people do from the root word ‘Vida’, ‘to know’—that the Vedas are only a bundle of old type books of knowledge. It is in fact wrong to suppose that the Vedas are merely a literature throwing light on the social

life of an ancient people. The correct way is to understand as the Vedic people believe that the Vedas are a book of knowledge with an unlimited latent power in them. This latter belief that the Vedic words have a dormant power in them is not anything that was ascribed in later periods, but seems to be ingrained in the minds since the Vedic days, as it finds expression in the Vedas itself. The Rig-Vedic thought-giver himself asks in one place, what will a person who does not realise that intrinsic worth and power of the Vedic words will do by simply committing the hymns to memory. 'What will

“ कि ऋचाकरिष्यति ”

he do with the richas?' was the question often asked in the Vedic times. The word 'Vida' itself does not barely mean 'to know', but it conveys a further sense of acquirement of something with knowledge. This meaning is really consistent with Bharatiya thought, that in the Vedas there is knowledge and the art of acquisition of something that knowledge points out and it is what affects and influences our human lives on this globe. We have already cited so many instances which indicate that the Vedas are regarded as having some superior and substantial value than mere books of literature like other heaps of knowledge. How this belief came to be perpetuated is not very difficult to understand. According to the Bharatiyas the Vedas are not merely a bundle of poetry but live and burning 'mantras' with efficacy and power to transform and bring about seen and unpredictable results in actual life here and before our very eyes. This was the genuine belief not only in the old days of the Vedic period, but one which persisted right up to the modern times of Maharshi Annasahib Patwardhan and the Mahayogi Aravinda.

The term 'mantra' is generally understood to be a set of words which can produce a determined result. In such a mantra the most significant and essential thing is the set of words uttered in a particular tone in a particular order which only make it efficacious. This sort of belief is seen not only amongst the people professing the Vedic civilisation, or the

people following the Zoroastrian or the Parsi religion, but also amongst the primitive tribes Sans civilisation which worship crude nature, stones and trees. The faith in the potency and power of words persists in fact amongst all the civilised as much as the uncivilised and the primitive races, on the surface of the globe. A handful of creatures who pride themselves to be rationalists may have to be excluded. We are not considering them at all in this our discussion as they are people who profess no faith nor have regard for any religion. But even these so-called pragmatists are required to bow down before the power of words as we will show later on.

Religion can be described as ritualistic or devotional according to its emphasis on rituals and prayers. In the latter class of religions in which only prayer is prescribed to achieve the wishes of the follower, the 'mantra lore' has almost no place. But even there specific prayers and hymns are supposed to secure the desired ends, and to that extent the belief in the efficacy of words is tacitly accepted. In the other class in which the ritual is a medium to secure the desired objects this belief is all pervading. In all such religions, the Almighty is invoked by some pet names. It is believed that the incantation of God's names in a particular manner wins over the Providential power to confer the blessings on the devotee. This faith is seen without any exception in all the ritualistic religions of the day. It was definitely so in the religions of the past. It will be noted that even the Christian and the Mohammadan faiths are no exceptions to this belief; rather in them there is more emphasis on this practice of incantation of the God's names counting them on a string of beads. The Koran has prescribed some particular names of the Almighty for more efficacious and speedy results in the attainment of occult powers by means of the 'mantras'. Quite a number of staunch Mohammadians are seen to practise this occult lore. Almost every Muslim emperor in Bharat used to chant his 'mantras', and their rosaries of diamonds and jewels are still there for us to see. In Christianity, especially amongst the Roman Catholics, the

practice is almost universal. The rosaries of some great saints of Christianity are famous.

'In the beginning was the word' is the famous saying of St. John. He said: 'In the beginning was the word, and the word was with the God; and the word was God.' What is exactly the meaning of this statement of St. John? It is indeed the very secret of the Christian lore of the 'Mantra'. It is the basis of their faith in the power of words.

In Bharat even the sects like Buddhism and Jainism, which level in criticising the Vedic faith and practices are no exceptions. In these faiths also more emphasis and importance is given to the regular practice of 'Japa' which is believed to be a sure means of achieving the desired ends. 'Mani pami Hum' (Mani Padma Hum)—is, as if it were, the 'Gayatri' mantra of the Buddhas. The Jews, Egyptians and Chaldeans pursued this practice as a faith. The Romans also believed in the sure effectiveness of words. The Greek word 'logos' which conveys the sense of the 'lore of Mantra' is actually derived from the Rig-Vedic word 'Rig'. This particular word 'logos' denotes the actual word which conveyed the thought of creation in the mind of the creator when he first created this universe. In short, there is not a faith or religion which has no belief in the power of words. Nobody therefore should be surprised if the Vedic religion also shows a similar faith in the potency of the words. But from this resemblance of beliefs it should not be inferred that the thoughts of the Vedic people in this regard were exactly similar to those of the believers of other faiths and religions.

This power of words according to all faiths is not inherent in the words itself, but is the acquisition or accumulation as a result of the favour or blessings of the Almighty. It may be an accretion or concentration of power of the mind of the person who says the mantra. In other words, the mantra becomes potent on account of all the concentrated spiritual power of the saint or the God's favoured follower. But the power of the Vedic mantra which differs from the other kinds described above is considered to be inherent in the words

themselves. The power which the Mantra has attained is in the words and not any super-imposition by the spiritual prowess of some saint, or by the favour of God or even as a result of the will-power of a very strong and determined sage or ascetic. The fruit of the mantra lies in its proper incantation and does not depend upon any other external factor. Favour or disfavour of supermen cannot stop the 'mantra', from being effective. There are innumerable stories illustrating the truth behind both types of 'mantras'. We need not go into the details which are so well-known. The fact stands that the Almighty assures the devotees that in whatever condition, when the word is uttered and the name of God is taken even by the worst sinner, it is bound to have its good result. The assurance is 'when a sinner, a fallen person, someone in distress, and one who is helpless, remembers the Almighty and solicits his help, all his sins are going to be definitely washed off.' Thus this faith in the 'mantra' is an universally accepted phenomenon. The belief has come down to us right from the days of the Rig-Veda itself.

It is said: 'Speech came to form from the mantras in the Rig-Veda and it is from the speech that the hymns were revealed, the hymns lie in that highest of the spheres, where the gods reside. What of this material universe, the very power and strength which run the universe and control it and even cause it, reside in the Vedic hymns. It is the great Creator of all this Universe, that created these sets of words, and into them reside all the powers which preserve the Universe; only he who knows how the powers reside there can reveal or demonstrate them; one who cannot perceive this secret, what use will he have of the hymns merely?' This is said in the Rig-Veda itself.

“स वाग् ऋग्भ्यो अजायत तस्मात् ऋचो अजायन्त, ऋचो भक्षरे परमे व्योमन् यस्मिन्देवा अधि विश्वे निषेदुः, यस्तन्नवेद किं ऋचा करिष्यति य इत् तत् विदुः त इमे समासते । प्र नूनं ब्रह्मणस्पतिर्मन्त्रं वदति उक्थं यस्मिन् इन्द्रो वरुणो मित्रो अर्यमा देवा ओकांसि चक्रिरे ।”

(Rig-Veda)

The speech as a whole is sub-divided into four sorts—'Para', 'Pashyanti', 'Madhyama' and 'Vaikhari'. Only the fourth, the 'Vaikhari', becomes the subject-matter of common knowledge and the rest three are beyond ordinary comprehension. Only those who have realised the secrets of the Vedic truths can understand the first three sorts of speech which are the receptacles of the great Powers. For instance, in the 'Asya Vamasya' hymn, the philosopher-poet says: 'There are four sorts of speech; three of these which are hidden are known only by Brahmanas who are the masters of knowledge; the common men indulge in and use only the fourth sort of the speech.' This very belief is repeated in the later pieces of

“चत्वारि वाक् परिमिता पदानि तानि विदुर्ब्राह्मणा ये मनीषिणः । गुहा
श्रीणि निहिता नेज्जयन्ति दुरीयं वाचो मनुष्यावदन्ति ।”

(Rig-Veda 1-164-45)

literature like the Mandukya Brahman.

In Sanskrit as well as in other languages, the relation between the words and their meanings is said to be threefold. It is either literal, figurative or symbolical or suggestive. But all these relations in one sense are all conventional as there is no scientific basis for the same. There is however a fourth relation between the word and its meaning and that is called by us the inherent or natural relation. This is according to the 'Purva-Mimamsa' a valid and real relation. This will become apparent when we take into consideration the meaning of the word 'Padartha'. 'Pada' means 'word' and 'Artha' means an object. As soon as a word is pronounced the object must stand before the eyes like a picture on the screen, nay, the object must stand before the mind without a screen that is in the atmosphere itself. This power of the word to create the picture of an object before the mental eye is called the inherent relation of the word with the object. It is the belief of the Vedic people that the Vedic words have such a tremendous power of creation. The words have not been created by any one, but on the other hand, from them has been born all that we see in this whole universe. There is

unexpected unanimity in this regard amongst founders and followers of all the systems of Bharatiya philosophers which believe in the existence of God as the supreme cause of this creation. When the Vedic people propound that the Vedas are not the work of any person, they mean that they are the revelation of the Almighty and not the compositions of any individual. Vedas are on the other hand, being regarded as the cause of all this universe and in that sense they cannot be considered to be the hand-work of any person or persons but are identified with the Almighty. Sometimes Vedas are called Pourusheya also, being the work of the Supreme Purush. It was for this reason that in the past there were disputes and discussions whether the Vedas should be interpreted and explained or not. This dispute is clearly reflected in the Nirukta of the great Yaskacharya.

In this controversy some Kautsa was the leader of a section of Vedic scholars and Yaska himself of the other. There is one Kautsa referred to by Kalidas in his 'Raghuvamsha' This Kautsa whether he was the disciple of 'Varatantu' or not, it is not very clear. What the Kautsa had to say in this issue can be gathered from Nirukta as under: 'The mantras which are made of particular words, and which have to be recited in a particular manner and order, have no meaning at all. It is the sound, and the sequence of the words which is most significant in them and not the sense; in fact they have no meanings at all,'

“अनर्थका हि मंत्राः नियतवाचो युक्त्यो नियतानुपूर्व्या भवन्ति ।”

(Nirukta)

Yaska refutes this argument by saying that the Vedic mantras have to be interpreted and explained for the knowledge of religion and the Veda. Yaska has indeed very lucidly declared: 'A person who has memorised the Vedas but does not know their meaning is just like a pillar bearing the burdens.' At the same time this statement should not be mis-

“स्थाणुरयं भारहारः किलाभूत् अधीत्य वेदं न विजानाति योऽर्थम् ॥”

(Nirukta)

understood to suggest that Yaska like many modern critics

was the respecter of meanings only. Yaska fully accepted the revelation theory and had full faith in the potent power of words of the mantras; but he also regarded that the mantras were full of meanings and that there was nothing wrong in interpreting the Vedas nor was their character in any way affected by doing so.

This non-human or impersonal authorship of the Vedas, known as revelation by the Almighty Himself and the belief that they are the cause of the creation are some of the features which excite laughter in the modern man. People indulge in asking funny questions like, 'Were the Vedas typed by the Almighty on a typewriter?' Howsoever incredulous the moderner may think of this, there is no doubt that since the Vedic days down to Mahayogi Aravind the belief persists that the Vedas are the revelation of the Almighty. 'These hymns and songs were produced from the all-purifying fire of the sacrifice'; 'this is the very breath of that grand cause of

“तस्मात् यज्ञात् सर्वहुतः ऋचः सामानि यज्ञिरे ।”

all the causes.' These and such other expressions give vent

“अरे अस्य महतो भूतस्य निश्चितमेतत् ।”

to the common belief about the Vedas. The Taittiriya Brahman states, 'The Brahmadeva showed Bharadwaj the three Vedas which were never known to him before. He took handfuls from the mountain-like heaps of the Vedas and said, "Bharadwaj, what you see, are the three mountains of Vedas, a particle from each is indeed as independent and great as the Veda itself. For the Veda is indeed endless".'

“तं ह त्रीन्गिरिरूपानविज्ञातानिव दर्शयांचकार । तेषां हैकैकस्मान्मुष्टि-
माददे स होवाच भरद्वाजेत्याऽमंत्र्य वेदा वा एते अनंता वै वेदाः ।”

But we know the Vedas to be four and even assuming that a portion of the Vedas has been lost, one may ask that there must be some limit, some measure, to the expanse of the Vedas. What is then the real meaning when it is said that the Vedas are inexhaustible? What is the real purport of 'a particle of the Vedas is by itself an independent Veda'.

Take the word 'Hriday' meaning heart. When the word is

uttered in a Vedic mantra, it becomes a potent expression. Now if someone were to pronounce every syllable of the word separately, will it become equally potent? In our common talk also a word has to be uttered whole to convey some sense. It is not possible to convey the purport by detaching the component syllables of the word. But the case is different in regard to Vedic mantras. It will be surprising to note that even the syllables in the Vedic mantras are said to have the power to produce certain results. The Shatpath Brahman

“ह इत्येकमक्षरमभिहरन्त्स्मै स्वाश्वान्येच य एवं वेद । द इत्येतदक्षरं ददन्त्स्मै स्वाश्वान्येच य एवं वेद । यमित्येकमक्षरमेति स्वर्गलोकं य एवं वेद ।”

(Shatpath Brahman)

says that in the word ‘Hridaya’ all the three component syllables—‘Hri’, ‘da’ and ‘ya’—have definite connotations and are the cause of special results.

The Mandukya Upanishad has further elaborated how even the ‘Matra’ and the ‘Pada’ have each one of them, when pronounced in particular manner the efficacy to produce a particular object or transform it into something else. It is affirmed that by the expression of those ‘matras’ and ‘padas’ it is possible to secure the object itself

“ओमित्येतदक्षरमिदं सर्वं तस्योषव्याख्यानं भूतं भवद् भविष्यदिति सर्वमोकार एव । यच्चान्यत् त्रिकालातीतं तदप्योकार एव । सर्वं हेतुद्वयज्ञ अयमात्मा ब्रह्म ।।”

“सोऽयमात्माऽध्यक्षमोकारोऽधिमात्रं पादा मात्रा मात्राश्च पादा अकार उकारो मकार इति । जागरितस्थानो वैश्वानरोऽकारः प्रथमा मात्राऽऽप्तेरादिमत्वाद्वाऽऽप्तेति ह वै सर्वान्कामानादिष्व भवति य एवं वेद । स्वप्नस्थानस्तैजस उकारो द्वितीया मात्रोत्कर्षादुभयत्वाद्वोत्कर्षति ह वै ज्ञानसंततिं समानश्च भवति नास्याब्रह्मवित्कुले भवति य एवं वेद । सुषुप्तस्थानः प्राज्ञो मकारः तृतीया मात्रामितेरपीतेर्वा मिनोति ह वा इदं सर्वं अपीतिश्च भवति य एवं वेद ।”

The Upanishad says in this context: ‘All this universe is in the shape and form of the ‘Om’. The present, the past and the future and that primary element which is beyond the measure of the three dimensions of time is in the form of ‘Om’. This anuvak tells us that simply by the utterance of the first

vowel अ 'A' all the desires become fulfilled and the state of highest dignity can be attained; by the utterance of the second vowel उ 'U' the highest knowledge comes to the mind and a son knowing the greatest secrets of knowledge is born in the family. Thus the Upanishad reveals the 'fruits of proper utterance of the individual syllables of the word 'Om'. In the Vedic mantras the relation of the words with their meanings is not merely symbolic but of inherent character with the object itself. The word is, if an independent material, which gives a shape and form to an object and therefore every part and component of the word, the 'padas' and 'matras' are also the material parts in the creation of the object. That is why the Vedic belief differs from the common notion. This relation of cause and effect is an inherent and inseparable relation between the word and its meaning or the object. The language of these words is considered to be the supreme speech in the Vedas and it is that language which has really a natural and inseparable connection with the objects. But this language is of course an impenetrable secret which is generally beyond the comprehension of man. The other language which has assumed a shape and form of its own accord, and which is considered to be the symbolical language, governs all our communications in life. The first language because of its inherent character and the potent power of creation produces the desired results, namely, the specific objects merely by its utterance whereas the other symbolical language will merely serve the purpose of exchange of ideas and communication of thoughts. But as regards its potency that language is absolutely barren. The Rig-Veda describes two sorts of languages,

“बृहस्पते प्रथमं वाचः अग्रं यत् प्रऐरत नामऽध्येयं दधानाः ।
यत् एषां श्रेष्ठं यत् अरिग्रं आसीत् प्रेणातत् एषां निऽहितं गुहा आविः ॥
उत त्वः पश्यन् न ददर्श वाचं उत त्वः शृण्वन् न शृणोति एनाम् ।
उतो त्वस्मै तन्वं वि सन्ने जायाऽइव पत्ये उशती सुऽवासाः ॥
यज्ञेन वाचःपदऽवीर्यं आयन् तां अनु अविन्दत् ऋषिषु प्रऽविष्टाम् ।
तां आऽभूत्य वि अदधुः पुरुत्रा तां सप्तरेभा अभिसं नवन्ते ॥
उत त्वं सख्ये स्थिरऽपीतं आहुः न एनं हिन्वन्ति अपि बाजिनेषु ।

अधेन्वा चरति मायया एषः वाचं शुश्रुवान् अफलां अपुष्पाम् ॥

अक्षयन्तः कर्णयन्तः सखायो मनऽजवेषु असमाः बभूवुः ।

आदध्रासः उपऽकक्षासः ऊँत्वे ऋदाऽइव स्नात्वा उँत्वे दऊश्वे ॥

त एते वाचं अभिऽपद्य पापयासिरीः तन्त्रं तन्वते मप्रऽजज्ञयः ॥

(Rigved—M: 10, Sukta 71, Richa 1, 4, 3, 5, 7, 9)

‘O, Brihaspati, the first, this nearer, which is taught to know the names and forms of objects—which is denotative is an easy one; but the other beyond that, is one, in which there is no symbolism; it is the natural one, and of the purest type; it is incomprehensible one, which a man comes to know only by the grace of God.’ This is what the Rig-Veda says about the two types of languages. It adds: ‘That is a poor common fellow who, though he sees with his eyes, yet does not understand the divine speech; he who hears everything that falls on his ears but does not grasp the divine meaning; but there is some other, though very rare, whom the “divine speech” reveals herself; like a beloved lady with her whole body adorned with ornaments and gay clothes, the “divine speech” embraces such a favoured person and reveals everything inside out without any reservation of the secrets.’

The Rig-Veda further informs us, ‘good people began to strive for the realisation of that “divine speech” by means of the performance of sacrifices. The “divine speech” was seen to have been enthroned in the hearts of the Vedic sages by these people. They then tried to woo that “divine lady” to favour them and to become their’s. And they then employed her in so many ways. It was in that effort that the seven poets have offered their prayers to the “divine speech”.’

‘The fortunate man whom the “divine speech” has enlightened by her divinity never forsakes her. Such a person becomes so bold and fearless that nothing can turn him away from the path of virtue, and heroism. But the man who has not been blessed by the “divine speech” wastes his life in the mere give-and-take of words, in the confusion of the maze created by words which are as useless as barren cows, or like fruitless and flowerless creepers. Words only hammer on his

ears, but they do not profit him like barren creepers without flowers and fruits.'

And what is the reason of all this? All have ears and eyes; all look alike, then what is that difference between their power of understanding due to? Why do they not equally receive the light of the "divine speech"? The resemblance is with water-places which have different depths. Some ponds are knee-deep, some are neck-deep and some others only breast-deep. But there are some unfathomable in depth in which you have to dive if you want a good bath.

The Rig-Veda further tells, 'there are some foolish people who embrace the evil to satisfy their passions, leaving aside this "divine lady" that is near them. They all engage themselves in manouvering their intellect only for the pleasures and passions and not for the reception of the sweetness and light of the "divine lady".'

(R. 10, 71. 1, 4, 3, 5, 7 & 9)

Such is the lucid and enlightening description of the 'divine speech' which is very much different from the common jargon. This natural speech which is self-powerful and the cause of creation of this material world is the divine language of the Vedas. Those who cannot realise the potency of the divine Vedic words, to them, mere recitation of the hymns will certainly not profit at all.

“ऋचो अक्षरे परमे व्योमन् यस्मिन् देवाः अविदिश्वे निषेदुः । यः तत् न वेद किम् ऋचा करिष्यति ये इत् तत् विदुः ते इमे समासते ।”

(Rig-Veda 1-164-39)

The Rig-Veda says : 'What of this material universe? Even those divine powers which run this universe reside in the words of the Vedic hymns. It is difficult to gauge how the divine powers can make their home in these Vedic words. But one who knows that, can easily make the words manifest those hidden divine powers. One who, however, does not understand this, to him, the Vedic word is useless. Only those who realise this are blessed.'

“एकं गर्भं दधिरे सप्तवाणिः, सवा ऋग्भ्यो अजायत ।”

In the expressions: 'The seven speeches conceived the one that was really born out of the Rig-Vedic Mantras', it has been affirmed by the Vedic thinkers that it is out of words, this material world is produced. The Shatpath Brahman says:

“त्रयमिदं नामरूपं वा कर्म तेषां नात्रां वागेव उक्थम् ।”

'The name, the form, and the action, are the three which make all this universe, and the speech is the mother cause of this universe.' This expression of the Shatpath has been very clearly explained by Mahabharat and the Manusmriti. Vyas

“अनादिनिधना नित्या वागुत्सृष्टा स्वयंभूवा ।

आदौ वेदमयी दिव्या यतः सर्वाः प्रवृत्तयः ॥

नाम रूपं च भूतानां कर्मणां च प्रवर्तनम् ।

वेदशब्देभ्य एवादौ निर्ममे स महेश्वरः ॥”

(Mahabharat, Shantiparva 233-24-25)

says, 'The creator first produced divine speech in the form of the Vedas from which all this universe was born. It was after that, out of the Vedic word, the creator gave names, forms and notions to living and inanimate objects and then put in them the motive of action.' The Manu-Smriti says: 'The Creator

“सर्वेषां तु सनामानि कर्माणि च पृथक् पृथक् ।

वेदशब्देभ्य एवादौ पृथक् संस्थाश्च निर्ममे ॥”

(Manusmriti 1-21)

produced this whole arrangement of the names and forms, the functions and organisms and organisations from the words of the Vedas.' It is therefore evident that in our unanimous belief the Vedas form, as if it were the primary element of words very necessary for the creation of this universe. The Vedic belief has been perpetuated by sages like Vyas and Manu. The great philosopher Badarayan in his aphorism

“अत एव च नित्यम् ।”

'Atæva Cha Nityam', and the great Sankaracharya in his commentary on the above axiom have both upheld the same truth.

We have, thus, narrated the nature and extent of the belief about the Vedic speech, that is universally held in this country. But was this belief based upon some scientific reasoning or

was it merely a blind superstition? Can this belief be convincingly explained in scientific terms which the modern man understands? Let us turn to this question and see if we can give a satisfactory reply.

Let it be noted here that it is not only in modern times that such a question has been asked. Even in ancient ages the Mimamsakas had raised this question and discussed it at length. The tendency to ridicule and rail the recorded experiences and beliefs of old times which is growing day by day has been completely sweeping of the essential of faith from the minds of the moderners. It is difficult to convince these days the so-called believe-in-nothing pragmatists. In fact, there is virtually nothing in the experiences and the expressions of the learned men and the logicians of old times which can become the subject-matter of laughter and ridicule. While we joke about the beliefs of our ancient ancestors, we forget that we are also equally blind believers in someone else's experience or realisation of truth. The question is who should be believed—the ancient logician or the modern scientist? Whose axioms should be accepted as true?

What do we see round about in the modern times? People quote Edison, etc., and take their theories to be truths. How many of us have ever gone to a laboratory to convince ourselves by practical experiments of the truth about their theories? It is certainly not wrong to assume their theories to be correct. The reason is, we have a sort of faith in the honesty of the scientists like Einstein and in the correctness of the results of their experiments. Is this not a type of faith? This is exactly what we call 'Shraddha'. In olden times there was the same 'Shraddha'—faith in the words of sages like Vyas, Manu, Patanjali and Sankaracharya. The people had not merely an unshakable faith in the honesty and truthfulness of these noble personalities, but a sort of unchallengable conviction about the great Yogic powers of these genuises and their personal experiments. This faith used to spread in those days by itself from mouth to mouth as it does even today. Who and how many of us have, otherwise, seen Dr. Einstein

or read his books? And yet the faith is there that he must be right. Because of complete disappearance of faith in the theories of ancient sages, it has become necessary to explain the scientific thought behind them.

The 'Mimamsakas' argued that the Vedas must be assigned to human or personal authorship, as nobody is able to say who has composed them. This argument is, however, as unsound as to say that a piece of literature whose author is unknown should be assigned to the hand of God. There is another similar loose argument to support the traditional belief that Vedas are not the hand-work of any human being in as much as they have been since days beyond memory delivered from generation to generation, from mouth to mouth, and therefore, they are not the work of any human agency. Similar is the case with almost every sectarian literature which is traditionally delivered from the teachers to the disciples. Another objection is raised. It is asked if the Vedas are 'Mantras' and if they are 'eternal', then there must be an unchangable uniformity in the manner of their recitation. But we see that according to the variation of the schools and recensions there are different systems of recitation. This reduces the theory of the author of Nirukta 'that the Mantras are regulated in sound and sequence of the words' to a meaningless proposition. The potency of the Mantras has been the result of the providential dispensation, the old conservative people answer. If there are differences in the sounds and phones that is on account of the mistakes creeping in the system of studies of the Vedas in different branches and schools. But this argument is also faulty in as much as it does not try to improve the faults that have crept in the different branches, but rather perpetuates them. And secondly, this reply almost accepts the charge of there being a mistaken sound or phone in the utterance of the Vedic Mantras. To avoid this charge, the conservatives further argue that when they say the Vedas are eternal what they mean is only that the sense of the 'Mantras' is eternal. But the order of the words need not be eternal or unchangable and may differ with

different branches. This is a more fallacious reply. With this argument the wrong sounds may become justified, but the very essence of the Vedic 'Mantra' disappears. The Vedic Mantra is, in essence the word, the order of the words and the system of the sound. It is the unchangable character of these three elements in the Mantra that make it all powerful.

Once it is said that it is only the meaning that matters and there is no significance to the words, then there will arise a ridiculous problem. We shall then have to accept a different expression with totally different words, but conveying the same meaning as a 'Mantra' as efficacious as one made of the original 'Vedic words'. For instance, let us say, 'May He inspire our intellect'. This English expression conveys the same sense as the Vedic Gayatri Mantra, but in no case can it be recognised as a mantra—much less its potency. The power and efficacy lies in the original words, their order and their sounds. If it is not so then one may know the substance and sense of the Vedas from English translations also but he cannot be recognised as the knower of the spirit of the Vedas.

'Such are the different objections raised in connection with the authorship of the Vedas. There is one common reply to all these objections to say that 'this is so as it was ordained by the Almighty when He created the Vedas'. A person having faith in the traditional conventions may be satisfied with such a reply, but a modern rationalist thinker will refuse to believe in that and demand a scientific explanation justifying this belief. Is it possible to convince these objectors? All the seers and the sages who have sung the Vedic 'Mantras', the great Vyas, and Manu uniformly declare that the whole universe was created by the Vedas. Is there any sense in that? Let us see.

In his 'Arctic Home in the Vedas' Tilak has just introduced this subject in the last chapter. But he has left it undecided or without much discussion by declaring that the question whether the universe was created from the Vedas or not is beyond the scope of a historical investigation. From his point

of view, Tilak was not called upon to answer the question as he was dealing with the subject only as a historical antiquity. We have taken this question precisely as a matter for determination in this chapter. It is, therefore, necessary for us to show the consistency or to bring about a co-ordination between the latest scientific findings and the beliefs and legends contained in the oldest books of the Arya-race as the proper course following the spirit of the time and now we turn to that.

Because the Vedas are Mantras, we must first analyse the conception behind the science of 'Mantra', before we arrive at the conclusion of the authorship, whether human or divine, of the Vedas. The moment the words 'Mantra and Science of Mantra' are uttered, a wrong impression of some occult jargon is produced on the modern mind. The 'Science of Mantra' is purely a Hindu science and it behoves the intellectuals and the rationalists to look to it in a scientific manner. Justice Woodraf says, 'Mantra in the words of a distinguished Indian has been called meaningless jabber. When we find Indians thus talking of their Shastra, it is not surprising that Europeans should take it to be of no account. They naturally, though erroneously, suppose that an Indian always understands his own beliefs and that if he says that they are absurd, it is taken that they are so. Even however, amongst Indians who have not lost themselves through an English education, the "Science of Mantra" is largely unknown. There are not many students of the Mimamsa now-a-days. The English-educated have in this as in other matters generally taken the clue from their Western Gurus and passed upon "Mantra Vidya" a borrowed condemnation. There are those among them who have in the past thought little of their own culture and have been only too willing to sell their old lamps for new ones. Because they are new, they will not always be found to give better light. Let us hope this will change as indeed it will. Before the Indian condemns his cultural inheritance, let him at least first study and understand it. It is true that Mantra is meaningless to those who do not know

its meaning. But to those who do, it is not jabber. Though of course, like everything else, it may become, and indeed has become, the subject of ignorance and superstitious use. A telegram written in a code in a merchant's office, will seem the merest gibberish to those who do not know that code. Those who do may spell out a translation bringing lakhs of real rupees for those who have sent it. "Mantra Vidya" whether it be true or not, is a profoundly conceived science.'

(Shakti & Shakta, p. 452)

There are many who consider 'mantra' as a prayer. But, mantra is not a prayer. In a prayer the devotee has perfect freedom to change the words according to his desires or sentiments. But the mantra is regulated by the rule of definite sequence of words, etc., which does not permit any variation. Mantra means a set of words, the words of course must be very potent. To understand the concept of revelation of the Vedas and the potency of words, it is inevitable to learn exactly the full meaning of the 'word'—Shabda. What is a Shabda? Patanjali in his great commentary on Panini's grammar defines the word 'Shabda' in the very first chapter.

“प्रतीतपदार्थको लोके ध्वनिः शब्दः इत्युच्यते ।”

(Vyakaran Mahabhashyam, by Patanjali)

He declares that 'a word'—Shabda—is that sound (the waves or tunes) 'Nada', which creates or rouses an experience of an object before the mind. In other words, 'Shabda' is a set of waves of sound which whole set together produces a picture of an object which it wants to convey. It is this definition that tells us that only a meaningful sound is a 'Shabda'. It therefore follows that the study and the meaning of a 'word' is virtually the study and analysis of the 'sound'—the Nada.

It is the confirmed belief of philosophers that all this perceptible universe is the manifestation or the exhibition of some unknown element. It is further believed that all that manifests itself out of something unseen, unknown, will, in the end, dissolve or merge itself into that unseen, unknown. The universe is, therefore, described as manifested-middle. Our philosophers argue that what we see all round is the

middle-stage; before and behind this there was that unseen, unknown; and after this also there will be the same imperceptible element. It is an established axiom of these metaphysicians, that this manifestation of the imperceptible is evolved in a particular process and is devolved exactly in the reverse manner. This process of evolution or manifestation of the universe is described in the Upanishads as follows:—

“सोऽकामयत बहुस्यां प्रजायेय । तस्माद्वा एतस्मादात्मन आकाशः सम्भूतः । आकाशाद्वायुः वायोरग्निः अग्नेरापः अपद्भ्यः पृथिवी ।

‘He desired, let Me be multiplied; let Me procreate; out of that or out of this all-pervading Soul was born the Space; in the Space there arose Vayu (wind); with the Wind was fanned to life; the Fire. After the Fire there came Water. Out of Water there arose the solid Earth.’

This self-will or wish of that Primary Element to become manifold is really the cause of the whole universe. The universe is nothing other than the manifestation of that one entity in different names and forms. The first manifestation of that will of the imperceptible was the Akash—space. The Akash—it is common knowledge, cannot be vacant. The vacuum has to be filled in by something and the Winds rushed in. The Winds are, in other terminology, the essence or the character of motion. If the space is stationary and immovable it becomes the base for all movements. And, in that sense, Akash, the space, is the cause of the Wind or the motion that moves in it. The Winds are the cause of Fire; and the fire in its turn produces Water. As a result of all these four the solid earth comes up and once the earth is formed, it produces the flora and fauna, the living beings and all the species in it. If this is the process of evolution, the process of devolution is exactly the reverse. The vegetation and all life die and are transformed into earth; the earth dissolves in water; the water is dried up by the fire; the fire is cooled down by the winds; and the winds become still in the space without motion; and that very moment the space again merges itself in the all-pervading element. In some Upanishads there is a slight difference in that they refer only to three elements but there

is no disagreement between the Vedas and the Upanishads in regard to the first manifestation of the primary element into the Akash. This is a universally accepted theory that space is the first and primary manifestation, the material cause of the whole universe. Now what is Akash?

The Hindu metaphysicians have enumerated the characteristics and the qualities of the five elements. The Akash, according to them, has for its basic quality or characteristic the Shabda. It means that what we call Akash or space today is a mixed product of the combination of the five elements, but its purest manifestation was and is in the quality of sound. It is in this sense that sound, touch, sight, taste and smell are considered to be the primary essences or pure qualities of the five elements. These are called the 'Tanmatras', meaning pure essences. So, Akash is an object whose essence, according to the Samkhya system, is Shabda. This virtually means that Akash or really speaking its essence, the sound is, in all senses, the primary material cause of the universe. And because it is the material cause, a component of this universe, it is called the 'Upadana' cause of the world. Logically it, therefore, becomes proved that sound is the primary cause of the creation. In the Hindu 'Science of Mantra', the world has been poetically described as 'a fine artful lady made of the atoms

“नादविदुमयकलासुंदरी ।”

or waves of the sound'.

Why is after all sound come to be recognised as identical with the space or Akash? The word Akash is made of 'Aa' and 'Kash'. Kash means to shine and the whole word means that which makes something to shine, to manifest, to be seen. Akash, therefore, means that which exhibits the unseen, that which makes a thing shine the first time. Akash was said to have been born out of the will of the 'ATMAN' the all-pervading soul to become many-fold, to multiply. How was the manifestation or the multiplication noted? What was the form in which the manifestation took place? The answer is sound. The waves of sound were the symbol or the sign of the space, because it is the sound that tells us of the space.

It is common knowledge that sound travels in space and hence the sound is considered to be the essential material cause, the Upadan Karan of the universe.

This particular material of which the universe was created, namely the sound, later on manifested itself in different forms and hence it is said that everything that exists has a kind of sound. The word 'Padartha' also conveys the same sense. 'Artha' means all that exists in this universe; and Pada means the component material or the words, or in light of the above explanation, the sound. In this way the metaphysicians show that the sound or the words are the raw material out of which the whole perceptible world and the universe are created. Even the gods and deities are the products of words. It is in this sense that Rig-Veda affirms that gods reside in the hymns.

According to our modern concept of scientific evolution of the universe, it is held that the ceaseless motion of atoms in the elemental materials are the cause of this world. Electrons which are supposed to be the original material, are nothing but an ever-flowing current of energy. Tremendous motion is their character and essence. We are told that different combinations of the electrons in the atoms moving in tremendous speeds beyond human imagination make the different objects which are all around us. The difference in these objects is due not to any difference of original material of which they are made, but in fact the speed and the motion with which they revolve. It is further told to us that light and sound are the transformations of the same material in different forms on account of the variations in their motions or the revolutions of their component parts. In these revolutions the variation of the motions and the combinations of the components are the basic causes of the diversity of our perception of the same material. In this manifested universe the only one thing that makes all the difference of shapes and forms of time and motion of the components. It is this factor of time and motion which manifests the universe in diverse forms. In his revealing book 'The Mysterious Universe',

the famous scientist Sir James Jeans observes, 'The tendency of modern physics is to resolve the whole material universe into waves and nothing but waves. These waves are of two kinds. Bottled up waves which we call radiation or light. If annihilation of matter occurs, the process is merely that of unbottling the imprisoned wave-energy and setting it free to travel through space. These concepts reduce the whole universe to a world of light, potential or existent, so that the whole story of its creation can be told with perfect accuracy and completeness in the six words, "God said let there be light".'

In short, ceaselessly moving electrons and vibrations caused by them in the space, are in other words, what we call this universe. If a man perceives different shapes and forms and different objects as he calls them, that is purely on account of the difference of the revolutions of the elemental electrons and the vibrations caused by them.

Man is endowed with only five senses, or means, or you may call the instruments by which he can gather knowledge. These are the ear, the eye, the nose, the tongue and the skin. They are called the organs of sense or instruments of perception. The vibrations caused by the waves of the revolving atoms create an impression upon these five organs. In proportion of the sharpness of these five instruments or mediums of knowledge, the master who possesses them, will gather knowledge of things. Now it is a generally accepted theory that light and sound are the transformations of the same waves or vibrations emanating from the same common material, but varying only in the number. If Sir James Jeans says that light is the original substance and form of the universe, it can be equally emphatically asserted that sound is also equally the original material of which the universe is made. Thus, we come to the conclusion which has been arrived at by the Vedic sages thousands of years back that sound is the primary material of the creation. Modern science endorses the Vedic view almost on every point. The perception of the universe characterised by sound comes in a limited degree on account of the limited capacities of the organs or the means of knowledge. If by some method the powers of perception of these organs could be multiplied and

sharpened, then there is no doubt that the same one thing can be perceived by all the five senses in their own ways. Normal eyes are not able to see beyond their ken or capacity as much as the X-ray can show. The simple reason is the capacity of the eyes is limited. So also the capacity of the ears, and other organs.

We have, thus, seen that even according to the scientific view of the present age, the whole universe can be resolved into its primary element of sound. If therefore someone were to suppose that, he could perceive all the elemental sound with his ears, that is only an imagination. Man hears a sound on account of the atmosphere. These waves of sound have a volume and form. Whenever these material waves of sound travel in the atmosphere, they create a vibration. Yet, the human ear is not capable of catching or receiving the minute throbbing of the waves. These waves, can, however, be caught by means of light and can be received with machines upto a particular limit. If it were possible to enhance the capacity of our ears and eyes to a greater intensive degree, then possibly it may be that these minute waves which have an imperceptible volume, can be received by our ears. So also the sound could be seen by eyes as if it were an object of sight with colour and form. In the same way if the strength of all the five organs could be magnified, then an object ordinarily imperceptible and unknowable through organs of knowledge can be clearly received by all of them. This logical conclusion arrived at by the scientific method has been put forth as personal experience by our Bharatiya metaphysicians and theologians. Our Yoga Shastra affirms that all the five organs can be turned to such an intensive capacity as to receive the most imperceptible and minute impressions. This is, in fact, what is known, in common parlance, divine or occult power to perceive. It is that divine power of perception by which the Vedic sages are supposed to have perceived the shape and form, the colour and smell of the heaps of the Vedic words through the sound waves. This scientific method to realise through the sounds the true nature of things which has been analysed and developed in the branch of literature known as

'CHARANAVYUHA'. We have already referred to the form and colour of the Rig-Veda as have been revealed by the Charanavyuha. In the light of the above explanation those descriptions of the Vedas given by the Charanavyuha can be now accepted as logically correct.

This universe is described as composed of five elements and seven planes. Out of that only the Akash envelopes all the universe and contains it within itself. The Akash is characterised by its sign, the Shabda, the solitary symbol of it. When it is said that the Akash envelopes everything, it means that its sign or the character, namely the Shabda permeates through or pervades throughout the universe. In the language of modern science it can be expressed that the waves of sound travel throughout the universe. This naturally gives two forms to every object. One, the broad material form which can be perceived by our normal organs and the other is, the imperceptible waves of the sound which are beyond our catching. But it can be said that if the ear were to be sufficiently powerful, it can listen all the sounds that are pervading this whole universe. Our ancient sages have experienced that sound to be just like the wave of tunes which comes up when the word 'Om' is pronounced. It is the primary matter out of which this whole universe, with all its variety of shape and forms is manifested. The modern scientist has only grasped the quality of sound of this universe. But, our ancient metaphysicians went a step ahead. They discovered that this first element, the Akash and its essence the unceasingly travelling waves of sound are not by themselves the primary matter but that there is something beyond these two which gives birth to the one and controls or sets in motion the other, the waves of sound. What is that the question is repeatedly asked. Our sages discovered that it is some invisible, unbroken, self-luminous omniscient 'desire' (ICHCHA) of something that is omnipotent. Every individual, according to our belief, has in his own heart a particle or infinitesimal fraction of the essence of that great PARABRAHMA. It is held that as the PARABRAHMA controls the matter and the spirit, or the matter and the motion, so also this ATMA in everybody's heart, which inherits the character of the whole PARABRAHMA can, with

its own will, transform and create motion. Every object, according to this theory, is merely a manifested form of the sound-waves making a Shabda. If the individual soul is able to establish its identity with that eternal and self-luminous omnipotent PARABRAHMA, then it can exert its influence on the sound-waves to the limit of its powers. In simple language this means that a powerful soul is capable of creating particular effect on the atmosphere in the universe. The sage

“ क्रमान्यत्वं परिणामान्यत्वे हेतुः । ”

“ जाल्यन्तरपरिणामः प्रकृत्यापूरात् । ”

Patanjali in two Sutras in his 'Science of Yoga' has declared

“ योग शास्त्र । ”

that such a transformation or change in the environments can be brought about by an accomplished Yogi.

Thus every object can be described to be eternal, inherent and self-existent. In other words, it has to be said that everything is APAURUSHEYA, meaning without a maker or of non-human authorship. In fact no other statement can be made of an object. *Electrons* were discovered by somebody. It would be, however, ridiculous to say that they were created by him. In the same way this universe characterised by sound was realised and seen in its real shape, form or colour by the sages. They analysed and understood the volume, frequency and order of those sounds. That is the nature of the Vedas. That is what we mean when we say they are Apaurusheya. It would be ludicrous to say that the Vedas were composed by someone. Justice Woodroff has observed in this connection:

'Shabda literally means and is usually translated as 'sound', the word coming from the root 'Shabda' to sound. It must not, however, be wholly identified with sound in the sense of that which is heard by the ear, or the sound as an effect of cosmic stress. Sound in this sense is the effect produced through excitation of the ear and brain by vibrations of the atmosphere between certain limits. Sound so understood exists only with the sense organ of hearing; and even then it may be perceived by some and not by others due to keenness or otherwise of natural hearing. Further, the best ears will miss what the microphone gives. Considering Shabda

from its primary or casual aspect, independent of the effect which it may or may not produce on the sense organs, it is vibrations of any kind or motion which is not merely physical motion which may become sound for human ears, given the existence of the ear and brain and the fulfilment of the physical conditions. Thus, Shabda is the possibility of sound and may not be actual sound for this individual or that. There is thus Shabda wherever there is motion or vibration of any kind. It is now said that the electrons revolve in a sphere of positive electrification at an enormous rate of motion. If the arrangement is stable, we have an atom of matter. If some of the electrons are pitched from the atomic system, what is called radio-activity is observed. Both these rotating and shooting electrons are forms of vibrations as Shabda though it is no sound for mortal ears. To a Divine ear all such movements would constitute the music of the spheres.

‘Were the human ear subtle enough, a living tree would present itself to it in the form of a particular sound which is the natural word for that tree. It is said of ether (Akash) that its Guna or quality is of Spandan or vibration of any kind. The “Brahma Swaroop” or “Chit” is motionless. It is also known as Chidakasha; but this Akash is not created. Chidakash is the Brahma in which a stress of any kind manifests itself a condition from which the whole creation proceeds. This Chidakash is known as the Shabda Brahma through which “Maya Shakti”, which is the cause of all vibrations, manifesting itself as sound to the ear, as touch to the skin, as colour and form to the eye, as taste to the tongue and as odour to the nose. All mental functioning is again a form of vibration. Thought is a vibration of mental substance just as the expression of thought in the form of spoken word is the vibration of the ear. All the Spandan presupposes heterogeneity (Vaishamya). Movement of any kind implies inequality of tensions, electric current flows between two points because there is a difference of potential between them. Fluid flows from one point to another because there is a difference of pressures. Heat travels because there is a difference of temperatures. In creation (Srishti), this condition of heterogeneity appears and renders motion possible. Akash is the

possibility of Spandan of any kind. Hence its precedence in the order of creation. Akash means Brahma with Maya which Maya Shakti or stress is rendered actual from a previous state or possibility of stress which is the Shakti's natural condition of equilibrium. In the dissolution of the Maya Shakti Brahma returns to homogeneity when in consequence Akash disappears. This disappearance means that Shakti is equilibrated and that therefore there is no further possibility of motion of any kind.'

(Shakti and Shakta, pp. 466-468)

No further comment on what Justice Woodroff has so lucidly explained is necessary. The primary sound-waves which create, give a shape and form to the objects are words and these words are the Vedas. The universe is a multiple endless creation full to the brim with objects inexhaustible in form, shape, number, etc. Like these endless objects, the sound-waves which create them—the 'Shabdās' are also innumerable each one independent and whole. Therefore, the Shatpath Brahman says that the Vedas are endless. The vibrations in the Akash are heard by the ears and they can also be seen in their colours by the eyes. That gives rise to colour and sound (Varna and Dhvani), two measures of any object. It is from the realisation of the different colours and sounds that the classifications into four colours, the 'Chaturvarnya' was arrived at in ancient times. It is sheer ignorance to consider the 'Chaturvarnya' system of our society as based upon four classes. 'Varna' never means a class. It means only the colour. We shall consider the four-fold system of our society as it has a close relation with these Vedic thoughts about the Varna or the colour.

The world-famous Bharatiya 'scientist Sir Chandrashekhar Raman has by means of his instruments, Raman Spectrum, now conclusively proved that the colour and sound are the keys to resolve each other. Dr. Donald H. Andrews, a professor of the Hopkins University, demonstrated a very amusing experiment on the Columbia radio. He took alcohol and other chemicals as mediums and relayed music through them. It was a very surprising experience to hear the music of the universe

through these chemicals. Once at least the poetic fancy that the world is a music was perceived by means of a scientific instrument. The Modern Review in its issue of 1931 describes the above experiment as follows:—

‘Sir Chandrashekhar V. Raman of Calcutta, India, has recently given Physicists a new way of listening to or really seeing the music of the atoms. The Raman Spectrum, said Dr. Andrews, shows us that a molecule, such as one unit of water is really a little musical instrument, much like a harp, playing its own characteristic tune. In fact, it is really light and not sound that is given off. The chords of water, grain alcohol, wood alcohol, chloroform, benzene, gasoline, sulphuric acid were played in turn by Dr. Andrews. Alcohol had rather a sweet-sounding chord, but chloroform, like wood alcohol, was harsh.’

(Modern Review, August, 1931)

From the above analysis, the character of Vedic words and the intrinsic significance of their sounds as well as their natural connection with the objects in the material universe will be clear. Panini, the greatest grammarian of mankind composed the Sanskrit Grammar which is so perfect that not even a single alteration or amendment so small as a comma has become necessary unlike all other known languages of the world. We believe that Panini was able to arrange and produce the grammar of Sanskrit language so perfectly for one plausible reason and that was he had understood and realised the structure of the words, their sounds and their relations with the material objects which those words denoted. Panini was one of those divine seers who could receive in perfect manner the music of the waves of sound, the meanings of the words and their relations with the physical objects. There is much truth in the legend that Panini learnt the language and grammar through the sounds of the ‘Damaru’ a hand-drum of God Shankar. It was he who had heard the music of the Vedic words. The Vedic language was called by him ‘Chhanda’ and the common Sanskrit language as ‘Bhasha’.

Those blessed and perfect souls who realised the whole truth behind the Vedas are the Rishis. Those who, in their absolute

identity of the seer and the sight realised the Vedas with their own eyes were called the 'Seers' of the Vedas; they who in their trance heard the sounds of the Vedic words, called them as 'Shruti'; and those who conveyed or expressed what they saw and heard came to be known as the makers of the 'Mantras'.

“मंत्रकृत् ।”

We hope that our above analysis of the Vedas and the Vedic words in terms of the modern science will have cleared this aspect that the Vedas are revealed and not a composed literature, as not a blind belief, but a matter of scientific theory. It can never be said that the Raman Spectrum or the theory of relativity as discovered by Einstein have created those particular truths which they prove. In the same way it is equally ridiculous to say that the Vedas were the compositions of the seers or singers. But the question yet survives as to how and where the hymns came to be revealed.

A hymn in the Vedas is a set of words. Every word in the hymn has a particular energy, velocity and volume. If simply because the words are put in a particular order the hymns is to be considered as composed by a sage, there is very little objection. But in the sense in which the hymns are looked upon as 'mantras', their inherent and eternal relations with their effects, namely the objects, the Vedas can never be called the handwork of human beings and that answers the foolish question of self-conceited egoists, on which typewriter God typed the Vedas ?

We have already referred to a belief of the Bharatava metaphysicians that the individual soul which is a fraction and fragment of the universal PARAMATMA, has the inherent power to create anything desirable with the Vedic words. But what generally happens is that this will to produce, which every soul, no doubt, has inherited, has been so much submerged in the indulgence of the passions and pleasures of our senses that the divine, and fine music or the sounds of words, the divine sight behind the material objects, all these in their finer and primary essence do not reach the submerged soul. The machine to receive the perception of the imperceptible waves of sound and light is only the human body. It has to

be tuned to such perfection and purity as to be capable to receive the perception. It is for this reason the Vedic and post-Vedic rules and prescriptions about the purity of life, and the do's and don'ts, have been formulated by our Hindu thinkers. The recitation of the Veda is a very difficult task and responsibility. Only those who are trained, purified and perfected in body and mind, in other words, whose bodies and minds are tuned to receive the sound-waves and the colour-waves, can realise the significance in the three-fold system of accents and emphasis of every Vedic word. Now only can be told what the difference is there between the phrases 'Agnimete' and its paraphrase 'I praise Fire'. Though the meanings of both the phrases are identical, the waves which the sounds of these words will produce are different, and therefore come the rule that the Vedic hymns must be pronounced in the same order, with the same accent and in the same volume of tune as the teacher would reveal to his disciple from mouth to mouth, which function no printed or hand-written version of Veda can perform.

In this connection the exposition made by a modern seer of the Vedas, Maharshi Anna Sahib Patwardhan is by far revealing and interesting. He says:—

'The highly-gifted men of the Vedic race early found out or rather became conscious that language as a vehicle of thought must always remain in or assume two forms. One of these forms of language has been that which has been used acquired by ordinary men in their working stage, and in which the powers of the "Swa" or human soul of producing sound have been called forth for the purpose of forming and clothing conscious notions which might answer the impressions produced by the mind and the senses in respect of external objects. As a hypothetical instance, it may be said that water may be called and denoted by the name of stick-breaker. Thus varieties of external forms, qualities, etc., of objects and other accidental facts and circumstances may be said to form the basis of the bulk of words and the relations of words as contained in the ordinary human language. The second form of language would naturally be one of which the sound producing powers of the soul are affected and called forth by the

direct impulse received by the powers, for instance, from the constitutional parts of the external objects and the internal state of consciousness and thus water in the language of the second form might receive some such name as hydric oxide. Thus there came to be recognised by the Vedic people two forms of human language from very early times. The ordinary or the conventional form was called by them "Bhasha"; and the second higher and transcendental form was called "Chandas, Veda or Paroksha".

(The Brahmaishi's Gospel. pp. 158-59)

As all the powers proceed from the soul or the active part of the Supreme being, the modes of their action must be considered to be determined by the soul; and it is for this simple reason that all kinds of powers being various modes or degrees of motions are found to be interchangable. Thus colour, light, heat, magnetism, and the like being forms of motion are actually convertible and as sound is a form of conscious motion of the soul, and as direct consciousness of external objects including mental conditions, etc., can be produced by means of the practice of the transcendental science, homogeneity and correspondence being directly established between the sound on the one hand and the external objects on the other and thus sound can be and has been made to assume all forms of conceivable and conscious living motion and thus the Vedic people found that the whole universe was a sort of congelation of sound. Thus the gifted individuals of the Vedic race therefore early recognised that sound was in itself an independent creative original power and the Greek word 'Omega' is the Greek name of the Vedic sound 'OM' which corresponds to the sound of the vowel O in English language. Note the sound of O in the native Greek words is smaller, spasmodically short, as the sound of O in the English word 'not'. The word Omega is made of the Sanskrit words 'Om' 'ek' which together meaning that the syllable OM is the sound of the unity. Thus owing to the Vedic teaching which propagated among mankind the transcendental and other sciences, the Vedic fact that sound was at the root of creation percolated as it were into the languages and the religious ideas of the various non-Vedic races. And accordingly the first book of Moses called 'Genesis', recorded

though abruptly and in an isolated manner the above-mentioned grand Vedic fact by using the word 'said' in its verse No. 3, etc., "and God said let there be light and there was light". And the same Vedic fact was also, though in the same manner, yet more clearly stated by St. John in the first book which opens with the following verse:—

'In the beginning was the word and the word was with God and the word was God.'

(The Brahmarshi's Gospel, pp. 165-67)

It would be proper here to answer two minor doubts. It is said if the Vedic words make a 'mantra', have they no conventional meaning? To this doubt there is very simple explanation. The common interpretation of a Vedic hymn need not affect the character of 'mantra' of the hymn. For instance, a musical piece becomes enchanting to the listener firstly not because of the meaning of the words but primarily because of the Swaras—cadences in the words. And yet apart from the sweetness and enchantment of those Swaras, there is a definite meaning of the words which make the song. The sweetness of the song is in its tunes, and its common sense is in the words both being independent. There is no consistency or conflict between them. It is therefore not wrong while realising the potency of the Vedic hymns, to interpret them in the interest of the society in historical manner. This inheritance of the philosophical thought has to be stored and distributed from generation to generation. While one section of the Vedic scholars may try to decipher the philosophical thought, the evolution of social structure and the process of historical progress for the common welfare of society in general, another section, though a very small one, has been always alert to keep alive in memory the character of the Vedas as 'mantras' by delivering them their disciples in the same chaste and unchangable accents and phones. It is they who have preserved the Vedas from going into oblivion, as much as, if not more than the great commentators and lexicographers. Today's research scholars of the Vedas are also performing a very commendable function no doubt; but the misfortune is only that unlike their ancient predecessors the modern ones have not only not realised the knowledge and truth in the Vedas, but

have very little regard for the sacredness of this most ancient literature of mankind.

Another minor doubt is often raised. The Vedas, so valuable a piece of literature and store-house of knowledge have been created and preserved by our fore-fathers. There is definitely pride and appreciation of these great Vedic ancestors in accrediting them with the authorship. But what credit or sense of pride is there in denying them the authorship and attributing it to the God? This really does not require any answer in view of our foregoing discussions. We have already said that Sir Raman and Einstein are the discoverers. To them the knowledge was revealed. Madam Curie discovered radium. None of these are the creators of the objects of their discoveries. What sense is there then in wanting to call the Vedas as the compositions of the sages when we have more than proved that they were revealed to them as much as the theory of relativity came to the knowledge of Einstein. It would be the deserved appreciation of our Vedic ancestors to ascribe to them the knowledge, or the discovery of the knowledge behind the sounds of the mantras and their powers of creation. It would be still prouder a claim to consider our Vedic ancestors as the perceivers or seers of universal truths thousands of years back which have become the subject of modern scientific investigations and discovery.

Thus we close this chapter by stating once again that the Vedas are the waves of sounds, which are the primary material out of which the world is created. In this sense they are not the creation of any human being. The sounds which were heard by the extra or divinely magnified sense of perception by the Rishis were put in forms of words by them. This arrangement in the forms of words of those sounds revealed and received through divine agency is called a hymn or a Mantra; the arranger is called the maker of the mantra; the person to whom the sounds were revealed was called the Rishi, the Seer.

We have thus completed here the examination of 'Shabda', (sound) as the cause of the universe and the conventional theory of revelation of the Vedas. It is not possible to correctly grasp the unfathomable values of the Vedic literature without

understanding the above inseparably associated concepts. Having done so, we now propose to turn to the magnificent interior of this grand mansion of literature called the Vedas which contained the land-marks of the impressions and reflections of national life of a triumphant race of very ancient times, but certainly not in the infancy or primitive stage of humanity as is wrongly supposed by many.

CHAPTER VII

BRILLIANT IDEOLOGY OF THE VEDIC PEOPLE

IN the preceding chapters we have considered at length and controverted a number of tentative theories which have become impressed on the Bharatiya mind as if they were finally established more as a result of calculated propaganda by interested personalities than the effect of the slavery of a hundred and fifty years. Now we shall look to the very reflections in the vast store-house of knowledge of the thoughts, expressions and social conduct of the Vedic people. This inquiry into the concepts of social life and nationhood of our ancient ancestors is all the more expedient and profitable, in as much as our nation, which has regained its long-lost freedom after centuries is standing at the cross-roads with a big question which way to take! Ours is not a new nation; nor is it the rebirth of a dead one. Our condition is just more or less like the Rip Van Winkle who woke up after a long sleep to find himself in a strange world. After a long slumber and slavery Bharat has to revive its nationhood to bring itself in line with the other nations. How shall we accomplish this? Shall we forget that we are the inheritors of an immortal philosophy of life which kept us alive all these years when all other contemporary nations of ancient times have been wiped out of existence and memory? What has helped us to vanquish the great ravager of mankind and nations? If we ask these questions, we shall get the answers which will certainly guide us to solve our present problems. But where shall we search for the answers? They are indeed to be found in the Vedas which have survived on account of their intrinsic and eternal values and the endeavour of Bharatiya people to uphold them. Before we embark upon the task of reconstructing our national structure it would be profitable to look back to the foundation and the shape and form of the Vedic nation. To discover the substance and spirit of the Vedic conception of nationhood will be indeed a very profitable endeavour. That alone can become the foundation and the pattern for the reshaping of our national life.

A glance into the brilliant glimpses of the life of the Vedic people will reveal to us an astonishing panorama of an all-round activity surcharged with a will to conquer as the result of an optimistic outlook. There does not seem to be anywhere in the Vedic age even a shadow of that pessimistic trend which later visited the Hindu society and converted it into a gloomy species of humanity which looked to life and this beautiful world with a condemnable sense of 'everything is transient, everything is sorrowful'.

The name of Scopenhower, the German philosopher is well-known. This western metaphysician in his famous work, 'World as Will and Representation' has looked upon life and the world in the same sense and spirit which had perverted the post-Vedic Hindu philosophy. He observes, 'It is the common notion to consider a man to be happy or sorrowful in proportion of the number of his desires which are fulfilled or frustrated. If this were to be expressed in mathematical terms, the enjoyment of pleasures will have to be divided by the desires of pleasures. Unfortunately it always happens that the dividend is a fraction as the desires for pleasure go on increasing in adverse proportion to their enjoyment. The result is the fraction which was $\frac{1}{2}$ to start with, goes on increasing to $\frac{3}{10}$, $\frac{4}{16}$, etc. It is therefore beyond any hope to expect man to become fully happy.' Tilak in his world-famous 'Gita-Rahasya' has referred to this wonderful mathematical analysis of Scopenhower and then related an amusing story from Spain. In Spain there ruled Abdur Rahman, the third Muslim emperor. This emperor who was famous for his sense of justice and feats of heroism used to keep a diary of his daily life. He used to record in it every small happy and sorrowful incident. Taking a review and account of his fifty years of life and rule, he discovered that he had only fourteen days of complete happiness.

Scopenhower goes much further. He says, 'The best thing about man in this world is that he should not be born at all; if he is born, it would be better that he dies in youth.' Such is the strange philosophy of pessimism which embraces human hearts in different countries and continents. What do we find in the Vedas? It will be a pleasant surprise that the Vedas

never even on a single occasion give expression to such gloomy thoughts.

Looking up to the Sun that sustains life on the globe, the Vedic sage confidently declares, 'this brilliant lustre which

“तच्चक्षुर्देवहितं शुक्रमुचरत् । पश्येमशरदः शतम् । जीवेमशरदः शतम् ।”

(Rig-Veda 7-66-16)

benefits the gods has revealed itself before us; let us be blessed to see the lustre for hundred years; let us breathe for a hundred winters.' The Vedic people were never tired of life; rather they aspired to live a full course of hundred years. Like Scopenhower, they never regret that they were born. They thank the Almighty that He has sent them to this globe to enjoy the light, to breathe the fresh air. They are grateful to their Creator and solicit Him to make their life run through hundred winters, and more if possible. All through this long life they want to enjoy to the very brim the joys of life on earth. Such is the sense and sentiment of the Vedic aspirations, expressed not somewhere in some solitary chance place. The sentiment seems to bubble up here and there on innumerable occasions in all the four books of the Vedas. The later Brahman literature also repeats the same aspirations. It would be interesting to note here some of the prayers of the Vedic sages which are illustrative of their desires and ambitions.

'Here rises up the Lord, the Sun, the Narayan on the top of the mountain in the east—the Lord who is a burning ball of lustre, the supreme witness of the world and so beloved of the gods. May this Lord confer on us the blessings of a life of hundred winters, with our eyes, ears, and all other organs in full trim; hundred full winters without the visitation of poverty. Without privation and poverty may we live not only hundred but more years. May our intellect and capacity to gather knowledge survive for hundred winters' full life. We aspire even more than hundred winters but let our hundred years at least pass in perfect joy and beatitude; let our life be uninterruptedly happy. We desire to remain invincible. No one shall have the power to vanquish us. Let there

reside in perfect order and full vigour the power of speech in our tongue, the power of breathing in our lungs, the power of sight in our eyes, the power of hearing in our ears. Let not our hair become gray; let not a tooth shake or fall; let our arms wield immeasurable strength; let our heart be a store-house of inexhaustible energy and strength; let our hips be strong and speedy and let our feet be always steady. May every part and organ of our body be in perfect order and full vigour. Let no incapacity ever overcome us.'

“तच्चक्षुर्देवहितम् पुरस्ताच्छुक्रमुच्चरत् । पश्येम शरदः शतम् । जीवेम शरदः शतम् । प्रब्रवाम शरदः शतम् । अदीनाः स्यामः शरदः शतम् । भूयश्च शरदः शतात् ।”

“नन्दाम शरदः शतम् । मोदाम शरदः शतम् । भवाम शरदः शतम् । अजिताः स्याम शरदः शतम् ।”

“वाङ्म आसन्नसोः प्राणश्चक्षुरक्ष्णोः श्रोत्रं कर्णयोः । अग्लिताः केशा अशोणा दन्ता बहुबाह्वर्बलम् ॥ १ ॥ ऊर्वोरोजो जंघयोर्जवः पादयोः प्रतिष्ठा अरिष्ठानि मे सर्वात्मा निभृष्टः ।”

(Ath. 19-60-63, Shuklayajurved 36, 24, Ath. 19-67, and Taithireeyaranya 4-42)

This is in substance the ambition of the Vedic people. They desired a life of hundred years of perfect health and happiness without fear and wants, without poverty and slavery. The Vedic sages aspired and endeavoured for a life of perfect happiness, strength, prosperity and progeny. In the Rig-Veda the Vedic Rishi begs of the gods, 'Give us all sorts of happiness'

- “ 1. अस्मभ्यं शर्म यच्छतम् ।
2. विश्वानि द्रविणानि देहि ।
3. आ नो अग्ने सुचेतुना रयिं विश्वायुशेषसम् । माङ्गीं धेहि जीवसे ।
4. इन्द्र श्रेष्ठानिद्रविणानि धेहि ।
5. उरुक्षयायनः कुधि ।
6. अस्मे धेहि श्रवो बृहत् ।
7. प्रजाभिरग्ने अमृतवमस्याम्
8. तन्नो देवः यच्छत सुप्रवाचनम् छर्दिरादिश्याः । सुमरं नृगण्यम् ।
9. नित्यस्य रायः पतय स्याम ।
10. नः पशु माँ अस्तु गातुः ।

11. रयिं देहि सहस्रिणं अग्ने वीरवती मिषम् ।
12. विश्वायुर्वैद्यक्षितम् ।
13. शं नः करत्यर्वते सुगं मेषाय, मेघ्ये, नृभ्यो नारिभ्यो गवे ।
14. हृद् रोगं मम सूर्य हरिमाणं च नाशय ।
15. पाहि रीषत उत वा जिघांसतः ।
16. अपत्यं परिपन्थिनं मुषीवाणं दुरश्चितम् ।
17. पाहि धूर्तेररावणः ।
18. व्यमीवा श्वातयस्वा विषूचीः ।
19. माते गोदन्न निरराम राधसः ।
20. मानः ध्रुवे परा दाः ।
21. मानो अग्ने अव सृजो अविष्यवे ।
22. मा दत्त्वे दशते परा दाः ।
23. मा शूने निषदाम ।”

(R. 1-17-8); ‘Give us all sorts of wealths’ (R. 5-4-7); ‘O Agni, confer on us such inexhaustible wealth as will make the whole of our journey of life a happy end. Give us the wealth which will be accompanied by wisdom all through life’ (R. 1-79-9); ‘O Indra, give us the best type of wealth’ (R. 2-21-6); ‘Make our homes full to the brim with all prosperities’ (R. 8-68-6); ‘Give us spotless reputation’ (R. 8-65-9); ‘May we become immortal through our progeny’ (R. 5-4-10); ‘O Aditya, bestow on us a house which will be spacious, which will be full and which will be able to protect all the members’ (R. 10-35-12); ‘We desire to have our own children’ (R. 7-4-7); ‘May our house be full of children and grand-children, all kinds of cattle like horses and cows’ (R. 3-54-18). ‘O Lord, give us wealth that can be counted in thousands; give us food that will produce strength’ (R. 8-43-15); ‘Give us life without any break or without any end’ (R. 1-9-7); ‘Will you not make all my horses, my sheep, my goats, my men, women and cows happy?’ (R. 1-43-6). The Vedic bard has also prayed for his protection from aggressive enemies, as much as he has asked for the pleasures of a rich life. He has also positively expressed what he hates. He says, ‘O Sun, remove the two diseases of jaundice and consumption away from me’ (R. 1-50-11); ‘O God, save us from such devouring animals like tigers, and enemies that are dangerous’ (R. 1-36-15); ‘Keep the pick-pockets, dacoits, thieves and

trecherous men very much away from us' (R. 1-42-3); 'O God, protect us from the cunning and the misery' (R. 1-36-15); 'May you destroy the disease that over-powers the whole body' (R. 2-33-2); 'O magnanimous Indra, we, who are your devoted followers, may be never deprived of wealth' (R. 8-21-16); 'Do not throw us into the grip of hunger' (R. 7-1-19); 'Do not push us into the hands of those who are starved and greedy' (R. 1-189-5); 'May we not have ever to fight with animals like serpents which bite with their teeth, or beasts which frighten us with their horns' (R. 1-189-5); 'O God, by your blessings may we never have the misfortune to stay in the house of a childless man' (R. 7-1-11).

The Vedic Aryas of all the things hated poverty and want the most. One Rishi says, 'O ye, poverty, wretched, ugly and

“अरामि क्राणे विकटे गिरिं गच्छ सदान्वे, शिरिं विष्टस्य सत्त्वभिष्टेभिष्ट्वा
चातयामसि ।”

“गोमायुरदादजमायुरदात्पृश्निरदाद्वरितो नो वसूनि गवां मण्डूकाः ददतः
शतानि सहस्रसवि प्रतिरन्त आयुः ।”

ever-weeping, Go ye, to a deserted mountain place. Otherwise we shall destroy you with our industry' (R. 10-155-1). In another place a Rishi says, 'Let the bullocks bring wealth to us; let our sheep bring happiness to us; may these frogs bring hundreds of cows to us; may they gift their life to us for thousands of years' (R. 7-103-10).

These varied quotations are convincing enough to prove that no dismal or pessimistic thought about wealth, joys of life, and life as such ever affected the minds of the Vedic sages, and the seers, right from the days of the Rig-Veda to the age of the Upanishads. They always aspired to live as free, independent citizens, to enjoy a life and its pleasures fully. They never thought it, in any sense undignified or disgraceful to express these aspirations; rather they took it as a sign of manliness. We do not see in the thoughts of these great sages during all that long epoch any perversion and pessimism which were ushered in the Bharatiya society by the Buddha and Jaina philosophies, which, as a result, adversely affected the future make-up of the national mind. It will also be noted that the Vedic seers when they desired the pleasures

of life, they never begged for them, but always aspired to achieve their ends by their own endeavour and heroism. The Rig-Veda says, 'God' befriends and supports only him who

“ न ऋते श्रान्तस्य सख्याय देवाः । ”

works hard and sweats to his utmost capacity.' An idle man according to the Vedic view is a sinner and no wealth could be acquired without industry and hard labour. They believed that all ill-gotten wealth would never bring real happiness which could be secured only by personal labour and constant efforts.

In the Aitareya Brahman Rohit, the son of Harischandra was advised by Indra to work ceaselessly, to accomplish the objective of life. Indra tells Rohit, 'O Rohit, whoever has heard to have gathered wealth without hard work? Remember, an idle man is a sinner. Only one who entertains the highest objective that a man can attain, is befriended by God. I enjoin you, therefore, to work and work and achieve the goal. The idle man and the man who always sleeps are, in fact, the emblems of the Kali, the most fallen; when the thoughts of something to achieve enter a heart, that is the sign of the second stage Dwapar; the third is the Tretayuga in which a man in whose heart ambitions have been roused, tries to move for them; but the best condition is of course the last stage, when the man goes on moving ceaselessly round and round. Do you not see that a bee collects honey by constant flying from flower to flower; the birds enjoy the fruit because they fly from tree to tree; and the Sun, does he ever expect rest or respite even for a second? It is on that account that his brilliance, his beauty and his power to supply the universe with light and life remain unexhausted. O Rohit, therefore, keep the object in mind and work hard for it.'

“ नाऽना श्रान्ताय श्रीरस्ति पापो नृशत्रुरोजन इन्द्र इचरतः सखा चरैवेति ।
कलिः शयानो भवति संजिहानस्तु द्वापरः । उत्तिष्ठन्नेता भवति कृतं संपद्यते चरन्
चरैवेति । चरन्वै मधु विन्दति चरन् स्वादुमुदुंबरन् सूर्यस्य पश्य श्रेमाणं यो न तन्द्रयते
चरन् चरैवेति । ”

(Aitareya Brahman 7-15)

— This is in short the crux of the triumphant philosophy which moved the Vedic people who believed in a robust atti-

tude of life. It is because of this their unflinching faith in the will to live, to live well, and to conquer the world that they emerged out successful in their journey of their race on this globe. What they asked from God were only His blessings and His brilliance. The Rig-Vedic bard says, 'those who bear

“ सा सद्याममृतन्यतो वयुनामवनुष्यतः । ”

hatred and ill-will towards us, let them bear in mind that we shall amply retaliate them; but those who are friends with us, we shall surely befriend them' (R. 8-40-7). It will be a revealing surprise how the Vedic heroes were inspired by the sound of the bow-string, how its throbbing and vibrating entranced them to heroic actions. The poet says, 'Who does not know

“ धन्वना गा धन्वनाजि जयेम धन्वना तीव्राः समदो जयेम ।

धनुः शत्रोरपकामं करोति धन्वना सर्वाः प्रदिशो जयेम ॥

वक्ष्यन्तीवेदा गनीगन्ति कर्णं प्रियं सखायं परिषस्वजाना ।

योषेव शिक्ते वितताधि धन्वञ्ज्या इयं समने पारयन्ती ॥ ”

the prowess and strength of our bows? With this bow we will win battles after battles and capture cows in large number. It is on the strength of this our bow that we hope to vanquish the armies of our enemy however arrogant and blind with power he may be. Our bow will snap the sweet desires of our enemy and help us to subdue region after region in all the directions. O, this string of the bow, so strong in action on the battle-field this string of the bow, so strong in action on the battle-field comes near our ears like a beloved lady to whisper sweet words which please her lord' (R. 6-75-2-3). The Vedic hero without any reservation expresses, 'O Vakpati, remove every one of our

“ उत वा यो नो मर्चयात् अनागसः भरातीवा मतेः सानुको वृकः ।

वृहस्पते अप तं वर्तया पथः सुगं नो अस्यै देववीतये कृधि ॥ ”

enemy that blocks our way, every one that is enemical to us, any one that arrogantly robs us. Make our path of worship and service of the gods clear off all difficulties' (R. 2-23-7). The Vedic heroes never entertained any debased thoughts about the use of their arms. They flourished their swords and bows for the retaliation of injustice. Once the evil forces provoked them to take up the arms, the Vedic people never hesitated to go to the logical end without bending themselves against

any odds. They always cherished: 'O Indra and Agni, you

“इन्द्राग्नी युवं सू नः सहन्ता दासथो रयिं । येन इह्हा समस्तु आ ।
वीळु चित् साहिषीमहि । अग्निर्वेनेव वात इत् नभन्तां अन्यके समे ॥ १ ॥

अपि वृश्च पुराणवत् व्रततेरिब गुष्यितं । ओजो दासस्य दम्भय । वयं
तत् अय सम्भृतं वसु । इन्द्रेण विभजेमहि नभन्तां अन्यके समे ॥ ६ ॥”

who are most feared and irresistible to your enemies, give us, your devotees, such plenty of prosperity and power, that we shall be able to vanquish our enemy however mighty he may be, like the fire which consumes the forest when there is a storm. May you remove this net of the evil forces as easily as a dried-up net of creepers can be cut off. You will reduce their prowess so that their hoarded wealth we shall distribute to all with the help of Indra' (R. 8-40-1-6).

The Vedic people were a very determined race. Once they undertook some commitment, they would go to the end of it fearlessly without any regard to the price or the sacrifice. This determination is 'undoubtedly a unique character of the race'. In the Atharva-Veda we get the following expressions which are meant to give encouragement and inspiration to the heroes who have embarked upon great undertakings. The Atharva-Veda says: 'Just as the heaven and the earth, the day and the

यथा द्यौश्च पृथिवी च न विभीतो न रिष्यतः ।

एवा मे प्राण मा बिभेः ।

यथाहश्च रात्री च न विभीतो न रिष्यतः ।

एवा मे प्राण मा बिभेः ।

यथा सूर्यश्च चंद्रश्च न विभीतो न रिष्यतः ।

एवा मे प्राण मा बिभेः ।

night, the Sun and the Moon, the Brahman and the Kshatriya, truth and honesty, the past and the future, go on always ahead without rest and fear, so too, O my heart, may you proceed ahead without pause or fear.' This is one of the finest literary pieces to be found in the poetic literature of the world sufficiently forceful to persuade and prevail upon a man to go ahead in his march to progress. It will be interesting to note that almost all the songs are extremely invigorating as well as exceptionally poetic. Following hymns may be quoted as fine examples of the lively sense of the heroes and the bards. The

bard says: 'This Dundubhi made of wood, tied with leather straps humming like a hero in fury is raising its resounding sound. O Dundubhi, roar on like a victorious lion. The Dundubhi roared like a lion; it *bellowed* like a passionate bull! O Dundubhi, you are indeed a mighty bull and your enemies are cowards before you. Your might to subdue the enemies is like that of Indra indeed. O Dundubhi, like a powerful bull roaring in a crowd of animals, you are gathering wealth and cows. May you go on roaring louder and louder breaking the hearts of the enemy with sorrow and bereavement and routing them to all the directions, forming them to abandoning their homes and hearths. Let the miserable wives of our enemy catch their children by hand and run away from the battle-field, frightened by the beatings of the drums.'

उच्चैर्घोषो दुन्दुभिः सत्त्वनायन वानस्पत्यः संभृत उन्निर्याभिः ।

वाचं क्षुणुवानो दमयन्त्सपन्नान्तिसह इव जेष्यन्नभि तंस्तनीहि ॥ १ ॥

सिंह इवास्तानीद द्वयो विबद्धोभिकन्दन्नभो वासितामिव ।

वृषा त्वं वध्न्यस्ते सपत्ना ऐन्द्रस्ते शुष्मो अभि मातिषाः ॥ २ ॥

वृषेव यूथे सहसा विदानो गव्यन्नभि रुव सन्धनाजित् ।

शुचा विध्य हृदयं परेषां हित्वा ग्रामान् प्रच्युता यन्तु शत्रवः ॥ ३ ॥

दुन्दुभेर्वाचं प्रयतां वदन्तीमाशृण्वन्ती नाचिता घोषबुद्धा ।

नारी पुत्रं धावतु हस्तगृह्यामित्री भीता समरे वधानाम् ॥ ४ ॥

(Atharva-Veda 5-20; 1, 2, 3, 5)

Reading all these virile sentiments which unmistakably point to the very robust sense of the Vedic people, some of the critics have imagined that those whose life and thoughts are reflected in the Vedic hymns had never risen higher than the brute passions to the heights of the spiritual and metaphysical thoughts of the Upanishadic times. It is suggested by these critics that the Vedic people considered the material joys of life to be the be-all and end-all of their worldly ideal and indulged into the base pleasures. It is surprising that such a haphazard view about the Vedic people could ever be entertained by both the admirers and the protagonists of the Vedic ideology as well as those critics who considered the Vedas to be the handiwork of a very primitive and uncivilised race of mankind. A section of the Vedic scholars who wrongly imagine

that the inclinations of the Vedic people towards enjoyment and indulgence in the worldly pleasures are characteristic of the Hindu religion rely upon quotations like the above to prove that the Vedas did not commend resignation or renunciation of the world. Such people strangely emphasise that only the positive robust faith in life creates an invincible spirit in a nation and therefore they propagate the Vedic faith. The other section which considers spiritualism as the measure of the development or civilisation of a nation, opine that such a stage was reached in this country only in the Upanishadic age. These people who think that the times of the Upanishads illustrate the most desirable perfection of spiritualism in the country, argue that from the Vedic days in which the people were pre-occupied solely in the sacrificial ritual and the indulgence in material life, to the Upanishadic times was a period of the process of evolution. This is the general view of the window on the substances and the systems of curriculums which have been prescribed in the university education of Vedic studies in our country in the present times.

The views of the common people are of course shaped by such thoughts in the general information and education given by the prescribed text-books. If this is lamentable, it is much more astonishing that great scholars like Dr. Ketkar, who had indeed a learned encyclopædic brain, should have been caught in the nets of such half-truths and fallacies. It is much more regrettable that a seasoned scholar like Dr. Ketkar should have forgotten, and violated himself the very rules of study and interpretation of the Vedic literatures, which he had very thoughtfully prescribed, and draw conclusions right in defiance of them. So irresistible are the effects of the wrong impressions once created by the writings of the Western scholars.

Dr. Ketkar, while reviewing the life of the Aryas as could be gathered from the hymns of the Rig-Veda observes, 'The Bharatiya Aryas were energetic, merry-going and quarrelsome. Their general standard of life was plain, to certain extent primitive. The bards who composed the Vedic hymns invoked the assistance of the gods in their efforts to vanquish their enemies on the battle-field. They offered prayers to their deities for success against their adversaries. They wooed their deities

to secure large booties in battles and prosperity in life. Heaps of gold, herds of cows and cattle, plenty of rain for harvest, good progeny, inexhaustible wealth, and long life, for all these they worshipped their gods and constantly invoked for their assistance. Upto the time of the Rig-Vedic hymns, there was no evidence of those tendencies of weakness, defeatism and resignation in life, which become almost a patent character of the later literature. In short, there is everything in the Rig-Veda except morals.'

(Maharashtreeya Jnanakosh, Part II, p. 26).

Dr. Ketkar who has very correctly established an inseparable association between the study and knowledge of the Vedas with the performance of the sacrifices and the ritual in the 'institution of sacrifice', who has rightly upheld the view that the four books of the Vedas are nothing but four bundles of one and the same whole and identical literature so arranged as to suit the convenience and use of the four priests who officiated at the performance of a sacrifice, and that Dr. Ketkar who has categorically warned the students of the Vedas to consider the whole as one literature, that we should take into account only the first of the four books, the Rig-Veda, and draw from it half-true conclusions about the life of the Vedic people, is indeed a confounding feat. That in this inexplicable and illogical research mishap an astute scholar like Dr. Ketkar should be misled by the tentative course of composition and evolution of the Vedic literature from the Rig-Veda to the Upanishads as has been assumed by the Western scholars and on that basis should propound a theory that the Aryas had not the intellectual capacity or the genius to have a philosophical perspective beyond the material and temporal aspirations of life in the world, is something which is much more amazing. We propose to present hereafter all the evidence which throws light on the fascinating stage of the most progressive spiritual insight, instincts, and achievements of the Vedic people, as well as their grand concepts of the moral in life, and the preaching of both in the common masses. If Dr. Ketkar's conclusions are startling enough the observations of the famous Bharatiya philosopher, Prof. R. D. Ranade are totally understandable. In

his thesis, 'A Constructive Survey of Upanishadic Philosophy', Prof. Ranade observes, 'In the first place, we must note that the Rig-Veda is a great hymnology to the personified forces of nature, and thus represents the earliest phase in the evolution of religious consciousness, namely, the objective phase of religion.'

(A Constructive Survey of Upanishadic Philosophy: By

R. D. Ranade, Chapter 2, page 2.

With all the due respect for the learned philosopher, Prof. Ranade, we have to offer our humble comment that he has not done proper justice to the Rig-Veda. There are innumerable references in the Rig-Veda itself, like; "That is

“एकं सद्विप्रा बहुधा वदन्ति ।”

one, but the learned think that to be many', which do not indicate the diversity of god-heads or deities, but rather emphatically point to only one inevitable conclusion that the Rig-Vedic sages had indeed first realised the ultimate truth which in fact was not discovered anew in the Upanishadic sages but had descended to them as a heritage of the Vedic age. The two Suktas, 'Asya Vamasya' and 'Nasadiya' are by themselves conclusive to establish that the Rig-Vedic seers had realised the truth about the basic cause of this universe, and the matter and spirit of which it is made, in the same process as the Upanishadic sages later perceived it. In the face of the hymn directing 'Gachha Dharmena' (Go by the path of religion), and the hymn declaring 'Sannaddho Manasa Charami'

“गच्छधर्मेणा ।”

“सन्नद्धो मनसा चरामि ।”

(I move with my mind always yoked up), which are very clear sign-posts of the injunction of Dharma and its practice, to arrive at conclusions like those of Dr. Ketkar and Prof. Ranade, that Dharma was only a superficial thought with the Rig-Vedic people or that the thought of religion had not so matured in that age, is not only inexcusable but ridiculous. Had Prof. Ranade also undertaken the thorough survey of the Rig-Vedic philosophy as he has done of the Upanishadic, we are sure that he would have come to the inescapable conclusion that the secrets of both the philosophies, their

evolution and evaluation are not two separate things but the identical ones. We have quoted the inferences of Dr. Ketkar and Ranade in this place only to show how even reputed intellectuals and independent thinkers are also confounded by so bold and bare expressions of the positive ambition of life which the Rig-Vedic people gave vent to unreservedly. If this be the condition of those who have intensively studied the Vedas, what must be the miserable plight of those who have never cared or laboured to look into this grand book of knowledge, or of those, in the words of Woodroff, who have prided themselves in only keeping time and company according to the tunes and footwork of their Western Gurus? This is not enough to indicate how and what fantastic theories are being floated and propagandised by persons like Comrade Dange who have girded up their loins to deliberately misrepresent and pervert the real course of Bharatiya history to serve their political purposes. It is amusing to note what false pictures of the historical past of Bharat have been painted by this pseudo-historian. Dange has written an *amusing book* called 'India from Primitive Communism to Slavery'. In that baseless and unhistorical propaganda Dange says: 'All Vedic literature is dominated with but one demand and the means for the fulfilment of that demand, namely, wealth meaning primarily food and more men (manpower), Dhanam and Praja. The first Dhanam describes his instruments of production, his economic productive activity and as an adjunct of that the second one, Praja. All Vedic Samhitas contain abundant material on these two questions.

'The struggle for food was a very hard one. With those crude stone tools, it was bound to be so. The precarious existence of the hunter, with uncertainty of the game, with running after the prey, with no shelter, no fire, no protection against nature and wild beasts caused a shudder in the memory of the Aryan. Whole groups of societies perished in the struggle for food and sometimes men wondered if they would all perish in the battle. The fear is expressed by the Vedic philosopher in his own way.' (Page 36).

Having patched together such fantastic imaginations, Dange

remembered the hymns on Agni and tumbled over the secret behind them. The first time possibly during all the long quest for the secrets of Vedic literature it was given to Dange alone to unfold the great truth behind these hymns and he very proudly propounds the theory discovered by him. He says that the Agni hymns are an evidence to show how fire was discovered by the primitive Vedic people and what a happy and far-reaching change it made in their whole life. Dange says: 'The Aryans had at last that instrument which immediately caused a great revolution in their life. The revolution was so great that all later Aryan life is ascribed to "fire", revolves round it and is centred round it. Creation, existence, growth, wealth, happiness—all proceed from fire (Agni). The two most vital changes resulting from it are the production of wealth in cattle and population.

'Fire made the hunt and fish easily digestible, when roasted or cooked on it. Hence, the great God of Agni is called AMAD, eater of raw food, and KRAWYAD, eater of dead flesh. It scared off wild animals, hostile goblins and ghosts. It could be thrown as a weapon in the form of burning cinders of wood or torches against wild animals and enemies who had no such invention as yet. It protected man from the inclemencies of weather and made movement and sight possible in the darkness of the night which could be very long and cold in the oppressive Siberian regions.

'Allied with fire came the art of domestication of animals, which solved the most pressing problem of a stable supply of food.' (Page 38).

Dange has, on the assumption that the life in the Rig-Veda was as primitive as in the stone age, formulates the theory about the discovery of fire. The sacrifices and the long Satras with the worship of the fire Dange interprets as a sort of collective life generally found amongst the primitive people who dance round fire. Out of his sheer imagination without the least evidence to justify them, Dange fabricates loose and baseless tales of community dinners, common dances, co-habitation and mating of any man with any woman chosen by him for the night, such a fantastic fiction the shadow of which even is not traceable in the whole of the Rig-Veda. The only

thing that was absent was the indulgence in drinks. And, when Dange says, 'well-fed and well-drunk, they slept round the fire, in promiscuity in the early days or retired with their selected pairs to their huts when, later on, the pairing family developed in the commune house-hold. Man was pleased and so was Agni. Thus the Brahman, the commune lived and laboured, enjoyed and multiplied.'

Dange was ignorant of the relation between the Russian word 'Vodka' and the Sanskrit 'Udaka'—which both mean water. Had he known this he could have certainly said that the Vedic people drank 'Vodka' in their communes. It requires no intelligence to discover that Dange is interpreting the ancient Vedas in the light of modern communism. Dange knows full well that all that he has said about the Vedic people is a blatant lie. He could not have failed to notice so many evidences directly contrary to what he propounds. An intelligent man as he is supposed to be could not have for a moment escaped the correct meanings of so many significant words like the 'Yagna', 'Brahma', 'Gotra', 'Sadasadvada' and a host of other Vedic terms which denote a very high stage of culture and civilisation which the Vedic people had reached. To avoid all that Dange has adopted a method which is notorious with Communist propagandists, namely, to change the meanings of words to serve their motive. Call the Vedic people as barbaric and primitive and then dig out certain words and expressions to show the evolution of the people from the primitive conditions. If no suitable words are available then put necessary interpretations on the otherwise well understood terms and legends. There is this difference between interpreters like Dange and other scholars that whereas the latter with all their vitiated outlooks and the impacts of wrong ideas, they do sincerely want to find out what exactly the Vedas contain, men like Dange are not concerned with what really exists in the Veda but are only too anxious and impatient to interpret the whole history in the terms of Marxian dialectics. Look for instance, the following observations of Dange on the term Brahma which indeed betray more than his learning his ulterior motive in writing this trash.

'They very well see that this Brahman of the Vedic Aryan is quite different from the Brahman of the Upanishadic philosophers. The Vedic barbarian in his primitive commune, not yet confronted by social contradictions, class-struggles and exploitation, was far away from developing the idealistic philosophy and cant of the later Upanishadic period. There the Brahman is the original intelligence, consciousness or spirit whose manifestation is the world. That Brahman is without qualities (Nirguna) while the Vedic one is objectively real, with qualities (Saguna). That one is realisable only by those subjective processes of contemplation which we find in the Yoga or Vedanta philosophy, while the Vedic one is an objective reality enjoyed through the quite material efforts of man. The Vedic Brahman enjoys life, eats, drinks, dances, is happy and growing. The Upanishadic Brahman is beyond sense, even reason, without feeling, emotions, to whom eating, drinking and enjoying is taboo, and through that taboo and starvation alone is it approachable. The healthy growing living Vedic Aryan had no use for a non-existent subjective, senseless, miserable, 'Unseen' Brahman. To the Vedic Aryan, Brahman lived in the collective commune and in the universe and, therefore he himself was a part of it. To the Vedic Aryan, the Brahman was the commune and its members like the barbarian attached to the moon, heavens, earth, and all to the commune, which with the Agni was of course, the centre of everything.

'Vedic scholars have seen this in the literature, but being under the influence of idealist philosophy want to make this Brahman a mysterious thing. Hang, Giggling, Hillebrant, Ketkar, Tilak and all went round and round this Brahman and failed to identify him.'

The prayers of the Vedic bards for wealth and progeny to make their life full and happy, the supplication for the fulfilment of their earthly aspirations and wants has led these materialists to put such fantastic and awful interpretations. Dange imagines that as the Vedic sages beg wealth and cattle from their deities they must have been either miserably poor and starving from want of food and must have been forced to eke out their livings by hunting in the jungles. He argues that such a condition exists only amongst the primitive and

barbaric society which had not yet discovered the means and instruments of better living. The hypothesis is not only foolish but mischievous. The words 'Sampatti and Dhanam' do not mean 'food'—as Dange suggests. It is useless to tell him, that there are innumerable references in the Rig-Veda to gold, pearls and stones. Gold is so many times mentioned that it seems to have been very much in use and was definitely to be found in abundance. Ornaments and various kinds of receptacles, vessels and containers are mentioned. It will not surprise the readers if we tell them that there are mentions of chariots of gold. It will be recalled that in the list of gifts to priests and Brahmans on the occasions of sacrifices, various kinds of objects are enumerated especially, cows, horses, gold, clothes, chariots, lands, etc. There are descriptions of seven gems and the over-seas trade. Taking all this into correct light, it will be seen that it is entirely wrong, nay mischievous, to impose the meaning of food on the word 'Dhanam'. As far as the supposition that the Vedic people were barbarious, living on spoils of hunting, it is enough to name the various types of gifts that used to be given to the priests which would clearly prove that hunting had long since ceased to be the chief means of livelihood; nor were the Vedic people barbaric nomads. It can be emphatically asserted on the strength of these references that the Vedic society was a well-settled civilised one, living a very high standard of life.

The Rig-Veda contains references to so many avocations and professions of life which can never be associated with a nomadic, barbaric race, living in jungles. A Vedic bard says:—

'Our talents are varied; so are the rules which regulate our lives; the carpenter looks for well-sawed wood; the physician is on the look-out of diseased persons; and the priest is always waiting to see if he meets a devotee who would offer Soma to the deity; but O Soma, you shall keep your pure stream ever-flowing for the sake of Indra only. An industrious man seeks the hoards of gold by means of old medicines, feathers of birds, or in glittering stones; we also are ever on the look-out of the golden coloured Soma. O Soma, may you keep your stream of pure liquid ever-flowing for the sake of Indra; I am a poet; my Tata (father or son), is a physician; and my

“nana” (mother?) cleans the corn by throwing away thistles and stones in it. Like all these we rush after gold very much like the cows turning towards the grazing fields; we seek wealth; but O Soma, may you keep your pure flow of liquid everflowing for the sake of Indra.’

(Rig-Veda 9-112; 1-2-3)

नानानं उ नो धियो वि वँतानि जनानाम् । तक्षा रिष्टं रुतं भिषग्ब्रह्मा
सुन्वन्तमिच्छति । इन्द्रायेन्दो परि स्रव ॥ १ ॥

जरतीभिरोषधीभिः पर्णेभिः शकुनानाम् । कामारो अशमभिर्युभिर्हिरण्य-
वन्तमिच्छति । इन्द्रायेन्दो परि स्रव ॥ २ ॥

कारुरहं ततो भिषगुपलप्रक्षिणी नना । नानाधियो वसूयवोनुगा इव
तस्थिम । इन्द्रायेन्दो परि स्रव ॥ ३ ॥

Let those who have studied the history of evolution of human societies on the surface of the globe tell us if a society in which there is a carpenter, a poet, a physician, and a horde of other professionalists as we shall later on narrate, can be considered primitive of the type which Dange wants to suggest! There is a clear mention of the sawed wood which presupposes a saw; there is categorical reference to the gold-rush, very much like the present days and yet if some one deliberately calls such a society barbaric one, his motive is too apparent. In any case it is either a total bankruptcy of intelligence or a clear dishonesty of purpose to interpret the Vedas in the manner as Dange has done.

If we just turn to the branches of material sciences, very high knowledge of which was acquired by the Vedic people, we find that they had a mature understanding of Arithmetic and Geometry. The latter word is in fact derived from Sanskrit term which means the relation of the radius to the circumference or the globe which knowledge was necessary to the priests in order to have circles of particular circumferences, squares, triangles, etc., and other designs for their sacrificial altars. The Vedic people knew to count by numbers from tens to thousands, thirty thousand, one lakh and five lakhs. It is in-

“सहस्राणि शतावधि । अधि पञ्चप्रधि ।”

(Rig-Veda 4-30)

conceivable that they could tell the numbers without knowing the first 'r'. Rather it is an irrefutable proof that a society which had evolved its science of calculation to such a high number as five lakhs cannot be considered to be primitive at all. The people who knew for certain that it is not the Sun that ever rises or sets, that the earth is round and has a circumference, that the clouds rise from the vapours of the sea-waters, and that the Sun is the cause of the cycle of seasons, the society which had mastered the arts of melting and moulding the metals, and manufacturing medicines, whose knowledge of engineering and architecture had reached the standard of constructing iron forts, temples of thousands pillars, cannot by any lack of imagination be ever dubbed as barbaric, primitive, nomadic, etc. None else but a brazen propagandist like a Communist can dare to prevent the truth in so patent a manner. No sensible reader much less a student who has aught of honesty of purpose in him would be so presumptuous to label the Vedic society in the words in which Dange has done it.

It is the Vedic people who are known to have first invented the water-clock for measuring time, the instrument to observe the eclipses, the weapons like the lances with glittering points which presume advanced methods of metallurgical melting and moulding, ships and pleasure-boats which carried them on seas for trade and entertainment, necklaces and anklets made of gold studded with jewels, rich and shining robes and head-gears, all the material objects of creature comforts which decisively prove a high stage of civilisation. Could it be possible we ask, in a nomadic society of barbarians? The people we meet in the Rig-Veda are a nation very much advanced and mature and not a primitive, barbaric race, as Dange wants to show them. If there were nomadic tribes and primitive people wandering from one region to the other in the Vedic age, they were at least not in the region of the Sapta-Sindhu, but outside in other countries and the Bharatiya Aryas were far above them.

In the Rig-Veda there is a clear indication of the four-fold arrangement of the whole society. Assuming without admitting the much repeated objections of some commentators to this

four-fold structure, at any rate the three-fold classification, into the Brahman, the Kshatriya and the Vaishya classes of the Vedic society cannot be denied. This three-fold or four-fold arrangement of the social structure, whether it is, as according to us, based upon the science of sound as narrated before, or according to the more popular modern interpretation of its evolution on the basis of the characteristics and capacities of the classes, was undoubtedly a consummation of mature social thought and organisation. It cannot be supposed that such a well-planned arrangement of the society into classes according to the psychological aptitudes and the consequent adoption of various functions and the modes of life by its constituents could have come out as an accident. It must have been a culmination of a long process of evolution in the making of the society, which must be pre-supposed to be firmly habitated rather than always on the move like nomadic tribes. Those who have gone through the pages of this vast book of learning must have come across innumerable expressions which unmistakably point to a stable and organised stage of the Vedic society.

It must have been now clear to the readers that the very foundation of Dange's thesis is swept off by the above-cited facts, as a result, the whole structure raised upon the imaginary suppositions collapses like a pack of cards. His discovery that in the Rig-Vedic age, the people came to discover the hidden fire which they adopted as their highest deity, does not stand to reason even for a superficial student of the Rig-Veda. Every one knows that the principal deity of the Vedic people was not Agni, but Indra. There are, no doubt, a number of hymns dedicated to Agni; but even considering this number of hymns, it will be found that Indra has inspired a larger number than Agni. The Vedic sages have not solicited the help of and offered the prayers to any other deity so much as they have done to Indra. This also pulls down the proposition of Dange that Agni was the principal deity of the Vedic Aryas.

Coming to Soma, it is now well established that the Soma was not an inhibiting or intoxicating drink but a soft and mild invigorating one.

It is beyond the comprehension of materialists like the Com-

munists to understand the subtle and the spiritual concept of the Vedic pantheon. But even taking into consideration from purely material and earthly angle all the imaginations advanced by Dange in regard to the Vedic literature, they appear to be lame and unappealing. We ask if according to Dange, Agni was adopted by the Vedic people as their highest deity, because of its significance and utility in nature and life, what natural phenomena did Indra represent so that he should have been the subject of a larger number of devoted hymns than the Agni? Dange can have no reply to this question, we know. There is no reference or any consideration of this point in that third class trash of mischievous misrepresentation of the life of the Vedic people. We have already cited so many quotations from the Vedas depicting the high standard of the art of engineering and architecture, of the rich life which the Vedic people lived, of the number of sacrifices and festivals formed on which occasions they offered very costly gifts of gold, chariots, jewels, lands and cows, etc., and above all the very intimate and highly ideal conjugal life of unadulterated devotion between man and his wife, that the fabrication of Dange, viz., the Vedic people danced round and round the fire, ate, and enjoyed, and slept in promiscuity, any man with any woman, is not only absurd but a dirty and disgraceful insinuation to make about a people who respected and adhered to a noble code of family life with utmost strictness. A glance at the wedding hymn in the Rig-Veda, 'this is a very auspicious

“ सुमंगलीरियं बधूरिमां समेत पश्यत । ”

bride, look to her and go with her in confidence', will give an idea what maturity of thought was bestowed by the Aryas on the institution of marriage. There is no reference at all to the promiscuous relations between man and woman which Communist Dange wants to propagate in the modern age and which probably might have existed in some primitive condition of the human society at some remote time but certainly not in the Vedic age.

His jargon on the word BRAHMA and his jugglery about its analysis is also clearly meaningless. Only two Suktas 'Asya Vamasya' and 'Nasadiya' are enough to shatter to pieces

the proposition of Dange. After placing with great eclat and ceremony the dead body on the pile of fire, the Vedic sage who asks the soul that has departed from that dead body, 'to go by the path of religion' (Gachha Dharmena), looks very

“ गच्छधर्मेणा । ”

much the herald of the subtle philosophy which found its perfect culmination in the mature and unshakable theory of action which the Bharatiya thinkers have given to the world. This Vedic sage asking the soul to travel by the 'path of virtue' seems to know intimately the theory of transformation of a soul after its abandonment of the mortal frame, and its existence beyond, or rather freed from the coil of the physical organism.

It does not require to be told that those serious thoughts which have been expressed by the Upanishads like the Chhandogya and the Geeta in terms like 'O boy, that Real

“ सदेव सौम्येदमग्र आसीत् । असदेव सौम्येदमग्र आसीत् । ”

(Chhandogya)

“ नसतन्नासदुच्यते । ”

(Bhagawadgeeta)

“ नासदासीन्नो सदासीत्तदानीम् । ”

(Rigved, Nasadiya Sukta)

was in the beginning of creation', 'O lad, there was nothing else before the beginning of creation', and 'that is called Sat and Asat', are nothing else, but mere transliterations of the Rig-Vedic truths, 'then before the beginning of creation, there was nothing but SAT and there was really nothing else than that'. What the Vedic sage says while explaining the secret and the unknowableness of the highest truth in the most difficult of the basic conception of metaphysics has been virtually followed by the Upanishadic philosophers. The Rig-Veda asks, 'Whoever correctly and substantially knows how this unfathomable universe came to be created? Who is there that can explain the secret behind this creation? Even the gods are indeed posterior to this creation. Who can then relate the story of the times before the creation started? It can be only that Providence who presides over the whole universe and

shines with the self-luster, if he be there, may possibly know, if and when this universe was created, and if somebody holds it aloft or no.' Is this not the correct description of the

को अद्धा वेद क इह प्रवोचत् कुत आऽजाता इयं विसृष्टिः ।
 अर्वाग्देवा अस्य विसर्जनेनाथ को वेद यत आ बभूव ॥ ६ ॥
 इयं विसृष्टिर्यत आ बभूव यदि वा दधे यदि वा न ।
 यो अस्याध्यक्षः परमे व्योमन्तसो अङ्ग वेद य दिवा न वेद ॥ ७ ॥

(Rig-Veda 10-129)

PARABRAHMA, the first of the six beginning-less entities which have become so well-known in later Bharatiya literature? This very thought has been expressed by the Upanishadas in the words like 'that from which all this known world emerges' and by the Brahma Sutras in the Sutra, 'that from which the birth, existence, etc., of all that is'. The Tenth Mandal of Rig-Veda tells us that the organs of human body approach their respective presiding deities. But the soul is mentioned there to be AJA, that is, not born. Geeta affirms the same principle in the propositions like 'that is never born, nor dies', 'that can never be burnt out by fire'. There is definitely a complete identity much more than consistency of thought in the earlier Vedic philosophy and its later Upanishadic consummation. It is therefore futile to suggest that the Vedic sages had not yet conceived the metaphysical thought which we find in the Upanishads. Look for instance to this lucid description of that highest stage in the spiritual realisation of which the Rig-Veda, says, 'Where the desires of the

“ न विजानामि यत् इव इदमस्मिन्निष्पन्न सन्नद्धो मनसा चरामि । ”

(Rig-Veda)

“desire” are all accomplished’ which is word to word borrowed in the Upanishads when they say, ‘because I have not recognised the real self in me, I wander in this life with my mind

“ कामस्य यत्राप्ताः कामाः । ”

chained in passions and desires.’ In short, from all the considerations, there is nothing more or even better said by the authors of the Upanishads, the Geeta, Shri Sankaracharya and other philosophers like Shri Gyaneshwar, than what the Rig-Veda has originally conceived and revealed. From all

these considerations, it becomes apparent that the Vedic Aryas had no doubt marched on the path of philosophical progress to such a height as to realise self-knowledge which is the core of the Upanishadic philosophy. Because of this conviction gifted men like Tilak think seriously and idealistically about the subject of Brahma as revealed in the Rig-Veda. In the chapter on ADHYAHMA in his 'Geeta Rahasya', Tilak has graphically narrated how the Aryas had reached the summit of metaphysical thought in the Vedic times itself. When we place that narration of Tilak and Dange's rubbish side by side one becomes convinced of the truth in the proverb 'fools rush in where angels fear to tread.' We leave it to the reader to judge the man that Dange is who conceitedly brags that he has discovered the Brahma which a philosopher like Tilak avoids to say.

We have examined at length the communistic interpretation which has emerged from the materialist outlook of life like that of Dange. But those honest students of the Veda who really desire to understand the Vedic conception of Godhood must first brush aside all the ideas that they were merely the worshippers of the phenomena in nature. Those who know are aware of the fact that even the primitive people when they worship the manifested elements in the universe, they do so with the idea that these symbols are the media to approach and understand the Godhood. Justice Woodroff observes, 'Even Negroes of the Gold Coast are always conscious that their offerings are not paid to the inanimate object itself but to the indwelling God, and every native with whom I have conversed on the subject has laughed at the possibility of its being supposed that he would worship or offer sacrifice to some object as a stone.' (Shakti & Shakta, pp. 279).

It is therefore necessary to understand the spiritual ideology of the Aryas before any effort could be made to explain the Vedic pantheon.

We have so far reviewed and commented upon the theories and conclusions which the modern students and scholars of the Vedas have rightly or wrongly arrived at on the basis of the avowed and freely pronounced aspirations and ambitions of the Vedic people. This method of deducing the theories from

merely the material ambitions without any thought or consideration of the metaphysical or the subjective ideology expressed by the Aryas is not only faulty, but unscientific. If the height of Vedic culture has to be measured, it must be done by the study of the Vedas themselves from all angles, and then the misconceptions like 'there is everything in the Vedas except the morals', or that 'the Vedic people were barbaric and primitive', will melt away. We shall therefore turn in the next chapter to the examination of the mature intuitions and ideas of the Vedic people.

CHAPTER VIII

THE VEDIC PHILOSOPHY OF LIFE

GLIMPSRS of the inter-social and family life of the Vedic Aryas give us a clear idea of the Vedic nation. It is imperative to brush aside all the accumulated prejudices and false impressions, if we desire to know what the Vedic nation actually was and be prepared to accept all what is apparently and logically evident in the literature that is known as the Vedas. It is essential to observe some prescriptions and prohibitions at the outset.

One Mr. Brock House has very categorically said that the proud Brahman caste has never borrowed from or accepted the obligations of any one in the world. This is literally true. We have already discussed the baselessness of some of the common prejudices regarding the Vedas and the Vedic people while reviewing the hypothetical theories of the Arya and the Anarya, the original 'Home of the Aryas' and the age of the Vedas. It is now being accepted by all the Western scholars that merely from the resemblance of languages, similarity of place names, ethnology, etc., it is not possible or proper to prove the borrowing of a civilisation, aggression, conquest and such other facts. The opinion of Dr. Keith in regard to the philological resemblances is worth noting here. He says: 'All the Indo-European languages have certain special points in which they agree with one or another of the groups and to deduce racial mixture and migration from these facts is quite impossible.' If this is so, then it is equally risky to try to establish the lending and borrowing of civilisations and cultures simply on the basis of the so-called resemblances. But unfortunately whenever some such resemblances is noticed, some scholars are too much obsessed by the sense of national superiority or inferiority, that they at once begin to declare the indebtedness of Bharat to the nation which shows those points of similarity. Before such sweeping conclusions are drawn, it is necessary to answer two very significant questions. The first is 'whether

there was any civilisation better than the Vedic, and whether that could be proved by independent evidence? We have already seen that it is well-nigh impossible to prove the existence of any civilisation independent and other than the Vedic one which discussing the problem of the Aryas and the Anarvas. The other and more weighty consideration is why the so-called resemblances in culture and civilisation which are said to be borrowed by Bharat from different nations are seen to be conspicuously absent in the existing successors of those nations whereas the same survive very much alive and active in Bharat. If we try to search for an explanation of this curious phenomena, it is bound to strike one that the particular characteristics which are said to be borrowed by Bharat are in fact original and indigenous to Bharat alone and were not the gifts or borrowings from the culture and civilisation of any other people or nations. Had that been so those would have persisted in the national traditions of the lending nation as they have done in Bharat. That is a clear indication that these other nations had borrowed those points from Bharat and forgotten them with the passage of time whereas Bharat which had them in the very blood and bones of its social life has kept them alive. The resemblances then rather prove that it was Bharat from whom so many other nations had borrowed their civilisations. It will be worthwhile to quote here the view of the veteran Vedic scholar who has clearly indicated who was the borrower and who the lender. Shri Aprabuddha says: 'This resemblance of languages, and some other minor similarities, it is proper to hold to be the outcome of the political domination and trade relations of Bharatiya people beyond the borders of Bharat. There is ample evidence to establish that the Bharatiya people had a considerably vast empire beyond its borders. There is no reason to reject this proposition except the misconceptions propagated by the European scholars in the name of science, and the myth of aggression which has no grounds in the whole Rig-Veda.' (Message of Rig-Veda).

Keeping the observations in mind regarding the probabilities of who the borrower and who the lender could be, we must also note the following basic facts before we gather the glimpses

of the Vedic nation and attempt to determine the ideology which inspired the Vedic people to action.

(1) The Vedas are not a complete thesis, well-classified according to subjects. They are only a compilation of a mountain of hymns which were possibly salvaged after the great flood. The scholars while they admit this simple fact become very strict when the consideration of a reference comes; and then they stick rigidly to the theory that the Veda means the Rig-Veda and draw conclusions contrary to the above basic fact. It is common knowledge that in the Rig-Veda particularly, it is very hard to establish any relation or intrinsic harmony, not only in two hymns of a mandal but even between two verses of the same hymn, which are more often unrelated to each other than not. The Vedic recensions which are before us at present belong to a period thousands of years old. These texts were also not the compositions of those times as such, but were merely the compilations of the hymns handed over from generation to generation from very remote ancient times. There is no doubt that there has been a very critical study of the Vedic texts as such. It has been inferred after the intensive examination and investigation of the Vedic texts that the compilation made at the time was from the hymns which were on the tongues of the Vedic priests. This is the nature of the Vedic texts that are at present before us. In this compilation various Vedic families and Rishis had a decisive hand in collaboration, according to the utility and requirements of their assignments and functions. The only broad principle which could be said to have governed this compilation was that generally the verses dedicated to one or a group of deities were to be put together in a single hymn. It would therefore be unwarranted to find a consistent harmony and unity of purpose of principle in the hymns or even in the consecutive verses as such. It would be much more fallacious to apply the strict modern methods of examination and research to the Vedic literature and to infer negatively total non-existence of a thing or a theme from mere absence of reference to it. It is also necessary before we draw any negative inferences from such absence of mentions, to remember the fact of the tremendous destruction of the Bharatiya literature that has been going

on for centuries and milleniums. For these various reasons even if there be but few indications or some stray but positive references denoting the heights of metaphysical and spiritual thoughts in the Vedas, that should be sufficient for us to lead to the conclusion that the structure of the society then, was not only stable but well-organised, healthy and happy so as to inspire the noble and enlivening ideology. That alone would be more logical to infer than to say that the Vedic society was primitive. Repudiating such positive and conclusive references and changing the meanings of words only to support the presumptions is nothing short of dishonesty and literary sin.

(2) In the examination of such a literary compilation of prehistoric age, the question is not how many times a reference occurs, but of what positive strength the reference is. If it is remembered that this is a compilation of literature which was saved from total wreck in which it was involved may be during the glacial epoch and the great deluge, which had almost wiped off the entire human civilisation, then, our above suggestion would be very much appreciated. There may be a single reference, but if that be of a decisive and positive value, then that alone should be enough to establish the respective stage of civilisation of the society whose life is reflected in the reference. What is even in the profusely productive modern times the measure of the standard and character of civilisation of a people? If we just consider this question, the answer is apparent that such references in literature or science which become the yard-sticks to measure the height of the civilisation of a society are invariably rare and small in volume. The measure of modern progress and civilisation can be said to be the theory of 'Einstein's Relativity'. The superiority and excellence of English literature is measured by the names of Shakespeare and Shaw. But how many Einsteins, Shakespeares, Shaws, Aravinds, Ramans are produced by a society at any one time? If Shaw is the measure of excellence of the modern English literature, that does not mean that there are Shaws all over England. The same test applies in the examination of the Vedic literature. After all excellence by the very nature of the concept is exclusive and cannot be profuse or

commonplace. If some European scholars had deliberately, as is now being established with ulterior political and racial motives, offered against this very sensible rule of literary criticism and evaluation, we must in our present stage of complete freedom amend the injustice done to our race and our ancient literature by reexamining the latter and correcting the unwarranted accusations that have been levelled against us and our literature. In this connection Tilak has given a very valuable warning in his 'Arctic Home in the Vedas'. He says:—

'Though we may accept the results of comparative philology so far as they go we shall have to be more cautious hereafter in inferring that such a thing was not known to the primitive Aryans because common etymological equations for the same cannot be discovered in all the Aryan languages. We have, it is true, no means of ascertaining how much of the original civilisation was lost in the deluge, but we cannot on that account, deny that some portion of it must have been irrevocably lost in the great cataclysm that destroyed the original home. I only want to point out the reservation with which we shall have now to accept the results of comparative philology in forming our estimate of the degree of culture reached by the primitive Aryans and show that when the primitive Aryan culture is carried back to the inter-Glacial age, the hypothesis that primitive Aryans were hardly better than the savage races of the present day at once falls to the ground.'

(Arctic Home, pp. 441, 443).

(3) In determining what is borrowed and what is the original source, the main question that has to be answered is whether the borrowed thing is consistent with the character of the borrower or the lender. It will be a mistake to judge this fact simply by looking at the resemblances. Whatever is consistent and consequential with the character and the original substance of the Vedic culture and civilisation must be considered to be an indivisible part of it and not a borrowed thing. What is not so can be taken to be something that has come from outside. The fundamentals of the Vedic civilisation can be briefly stated as follows:—

(a) Authority of the science based on personal experience

beyond the range of physical perception; (b) acceptance of the existence of an omnipotent, omniscient power controlling the universe; (c) immortality of the soul; (d) continuity or rebirth of the individual souls following their actions; (e) doctrine of rebirth; (f) the theory of Karma; (g) the doctrine of rise or fall of the individual soul in pursuance of its Karma; (h) evolution and devolution of matter; (i) mutual relation and interdependence between the universe beyond physical perception and the perceptible world or as it is called the spiritual and material worlds; (j) faith in the ideal of transformation of the brute into the divine, with personal realisation of its accomplishability; (k) faith in the intrinsic worth of the spiritual evolution rather than the material view of life; (l) penance is the cause of the creation of the universe, and its supreme significance as the real Dharma; (m) conviction that it is ignorance of the self that is the cause of regeneration; and that true knowledge is what enlightens one about the truth, that in ultimate analysis the whole universe can be resolved to one thing; (n) gods are the controllers of the universe which is imperceptible as well as gross, and that they are luminous, all-knowing, and immortal; (o) gods and human beings are interdependent: the sacrifice and penance of men increase the powers of gods, as the favours of the latter turn out to be the blessings of men; (p) feasibility of human beings attaining godhood; (q) gods cannot be charged with any motive except control and favour in their conducts; (r) the institution of sacrifice; (s) the science of 'Dhyan Yoga' (meditation); (t) speech is of two categories, namely, super-human and human; and the same manifests in four forms, the 'para', 'pashyanti', 'madhyama' and 'vaikhari'; the godly speech is the most potent; out of that self powerful speech the whole universe was created; (u) scientific classification of the whole universe into seven divisions, for instance, like the 'Bhu, Bhuvah, Swaha, etc.' This in fact the seven-fold universe (arranged into seven abodes).

This is broadly the nature of the tenets which constitute the Vedic civilisation. Whatever therefore is found either in Bharat or outside, consistent with the above almost exclusive features has to be construed as emanating from or the product

of the Vedic civilisation. We are presently going to show how this constitution and character of the Vedic civilisation can be inferred from the Vedas themselves.

(4) Let us now settle the point of interpolations. In this regard also the same rule has to be applied. Whatever is contradictory or inconsistent with the fundamentals of a civilisation has to be rejected as interpolation. It is very much regretted that the Western scholars and their followers have used this scissor of the argument of interpolation so indiscreetly and perversely which shakes the faith of any honest student in their motives. The task of interpreting the Vedas and discovering the mysteries contained in them, must be accomplished without offending the age-long and unbroken traditions with the assistance of the histories, Puranas, and the Vedic literature. The Nirukta and the great commentary of Sayan must be duly respected in determining the Vedic terminology and diction. It should not be overlooked that among the historical Vedic commentators there were great didactic and dialectic masters, theologians, ritualists, logicians like Yaska, Jaimini, Sayan who were not merely selfless devoted believers in the institution of the Vedic sacrifice but equally well-versed in spiritual experiences and historical methods. These great giants had as much a claim and authority to interpret the Vedas according to their genius in the light of their philosophical faiths as the modern scholar has. But a significant difference between these ancient masters and the modern scholars has to be well-remembered. The Bharatiya commentators had the distinction of possessing personal experience and knowledge of the tradition; they were bound by the prescriptions of their living faith for which they had inherent affinity and affection. It was their intent and purpose almost a duty to preserve and perpetuate the civilisation of which they were the products. The European students in contrast have nothing of this character so essential for the correct understanding of the people and their civilisation. Rather they are obsessed with boundless egoism and the purpose of many of them is vitiated by a patent political motive, both of which more than often lead these researches to wrong tracks. The only reasonable course is therefore to interpret the Vedas consistency with the character and the

traditions of the people, and their philosophy, which alone will take us nearer the truth. It would be fitting to draw the attentions to the warning uttered by the old masters in the interpretation of the Vedas. They say:—

इतिहासपुराणाभ्यां वेदं समुपबृंहयेत् ।

बिभेयत्पश्रुताद्वेदो मामयं प्रहरेदिति ॥

‘The Veda should be studied and interpreted by recourse to the histories and the Puranas. The Veda is indeed always afraid of the fool with little knowledge who may strike him.’

The Puranas have been reduced to ridicule by senseless derivations like ‘Pura api navam’ meaning ‘Old and yet ever anew’ or by unjustifiable jokes that they are merely cock-and-bull stories. The real connotation of the word has been lost by such ignorant imputations. ‘Pura’ means the seven-fold universe, and ‘An’ the life—(‘An’ ‘Pranane’ according to Panini). “अन-प्राणने ।” The whole word Puran therefore indicates the literature which deals with the story of the universe. Dr. Winternitz has rightly described the Puranas as ‘cosmic mythology’. Those who ignored this character of the Puranas as describing the creation, existence and devolution of the whole universe, and lost themselves in the maze of the rolls of dynasties, failed to get the right insight into the Puranic literature. This is very well illustrated in Dr. Ketkar’s discussions on the ‘Dashrajna War’. If on the other hand the Puranas are acknowledged as search-lights to discover the soul and spirit of the Universe according to the ideas of the Vedic seers, then indeed the whole mystery of the Vedic pantheon will be satisfactorily resolved and the wrong notions about the nature-worship, etc., will vanish. The mistake in the misconception of holding the period between Vedas to the Upanishads as a course of evolution of the doctrine of Vedic pantheism will also become apparent.

The cataclysm caused by the glacial descent is considered to be an epoch-changing land-mark in the history of the Vedic civilisation. What we have inherited in the form of the Vedas is merely a compilation made after the tragedy by the great Vedas of the remnants of the Vedic literature that survived

the great unprecedented catastrophe. This compilation it must be noted, was not the first or the last one. This compilation of Vyas, which was the second in order, was preceded in the pre-glacial epoch by an elaborate attempt to put together all the concepts of the Vedic civilisation based upon the 'institute of sacrifice', and the fundamental principles and practices of the well organised Vedic society. This is evident from the Vedas themselves as they are in our hands today.

“देवानां पूर्वे युगे ; तानि धर्माणि प्रथमान्यासन् ।”

'In the previous epoch of the Gods; those were the social laws, the Dharmas in the beginning.' This statement in a Rig-Vedic hymn unmistakably points to the pre-glacial age of Gods and the laws which existed then. It is beyond doubt that the Soma which was available in abundance before the glacial age was offered in profusion by the Vedic people to their esteemed deities. The legends about the prowess of Vishpala and Mudgalani and references to the intense devotion of Ghosha and Apala obviously belong to this ancient epoch. The relics of the Vedic civilisation which are discovered in distant lands like Mexico today, are the sign-post of its vast expanse and domination. The Puranas indeed enlighten us on this fact of the first Vedic compilation in that bygone age in such references as 'the Vedas were three in number, in three mouths'; and 'Vedas existed in four mouths'.

“पुरुष एवासीत् ऋषी त्रेतासुखे नृप वेदा आसंधतुमुखात् ।”

The metamorphosis which the cataclysm of the glacial descent brought on the surface of this globe also dealt a heavy blow to the social structure of the Vedic people. The Soma plant became extinct. The survivors with great effort and industry collected the remnants of the Vedic literature, and having compiled them together, preserved them for the posterity. It is on account of this fact that we find series of hymns, and songs in the same hymn, unconnected with each other. It is only to the superhuman genius and industry of Vyas that credit must be given for having saved and compiled the scattered Vedic literature. There remained, however, all the scattered memories about the pre-glacial history, the knowledge of science explaining the creation, and the life of this

universe, as also the organisation, structure and the career of the then society. All this required to be collected and stored in a composite form for the posterity to remember. It was for this purpose that the eighteen Puranas were composed. If this aspect of the Puranas is rightly appreciated, then it will be easy to understand what a rich treasure of ancient history of the people, their thoughts, philosophies, the conditions of the society, and its high civilisation mark, have been preserved in them. Then it becomes self-evident how much and what sort of inter-relation is there between the Vedas and the Puranas. How under the circumstance can they be ignored in the studies of the Vedas?

(5) The Western scholars have divided the history of the Vedic people in different periods according to the thoughts expressed in different sections of the literature. They presuppose that the Vedic society was only a single-layered one. On this supposition they assign all references which contain higher philosophical or spiritual thought to a later age. The pieces which contain thoughts of the mundane and material aspirations as well as, all references to the pantheism belong in the opinion of these scholars to an earlier and undeveloped period. For such a conclusion it is obligatory to presume that the society was a uniform one of a single layer. But this is a fallacious hypothesis. If it is shown, as is most natural, that the then society was also as diverse in its stages of development as our modern societies are everywhere, then the whole structure of the theory falls to the ground. We find in our contemporary age in the European society a genius and noble character like Dr. Einstein co-existing side-by-side with abominable samples of humanity like Dr. Malan.

How do these two products of the same age co-exist? Can it be said that they belong to different periods? They represent only two different sections and layers of human society. In Bharat also we see that on one hand there are such noble souls and intellectuals like Dr. Raman, living side-by-side with very ordinary masses who are interested only in a piece of bread or a bowl of rice. The fact is, this is true, of all societies in all ages. It must have been so even in the Vedic age. It can never be claimed that in that age all people were

of the highest order like the great thought-givers. It is not necessary to imagine different periods according to higher or lower thoughts as has been done by the Western scholars.

(6) Tentative suggestions offered by the yet imperfect sciences like philology, anthropology, geology, etc., should not be accepted as final and irrefutable theories but should be used with care in arriving at definite conclusions.

(7) There are so many things in the Vedas which have become utterly understandable on account of lapse of time and memories. Efforts are being made to put unwarranted interpretations on certain words and force these wrong meanings upon the credulous readers. It is better to leave such instances as they are.

(8) The correct way to interpret the Vedas is therefore to keep the mind open and find out the truth with the assistance of the Vedic literature itself.

If one finds the traces of a higher thought and ways of life in the Vedas, then one must honestly admit that the people lived that life. Otherwise as has been done by Dange, it will be a foolish effort to try to put absurd meanings on very well understood words like 'Brahma' on the wrong hypothesis that the Vedic people were primitive.

By adopting this well recognised method of studying the Vedas, one will discover a very accomplished state of civilisation in the Vedic literature. It is on account of the strength and the sound foundation of the society built by the Vedic people that Bharatiya culture and civilisation have survived and maintained their soul and spirit.

We have already repudiated the perverted ideas of Dange on Vedic life. Dr. Ketkar has suggested that the Vedas contain everything except the moral stature and that the approach to life of the Vedic people was confined purely to mundane and material sphere and nothing beyond that. It is unfortunate that the histories written in modern days also do not go beyond this vision. It is more unfortunate that many of the hot-blooded Hindu propagandists affirm in a shallow and thoughtless manner that it is the materialistic value of life of the Vedic people, which they appreciate and aspire for. They go even beyond this and deprecate the higher evolution and

excellence of the spiritual and philosophical Vedic thought. Keeping in mind the line of interpretation and study of the Vedic literature given above one however surprisingly discovers quite another vista of the Vedic age. We have enumerated in detail the subject of Vedic aspiration, wealth, progeny, cattle, peace, plenty of all which the Vedic people strived their best to acquire. But it would be wrong and unjust to imagine that they stopped only there. The Vedic people have always held equally earnestly the desire to rise higher and higher in the field of spiritual life. Here is one out of innumerable references which unmistakably point to the spiritual and ethical ideas of the Vedic seer.

इमे मा पीता यशसः उरुष्यवो रथं न गावः समनाह पर्वसु ।

ते मा रक्षन्तु विस्रसश्चरित्रादुत मा सावद्यव्यन्तु इन्द्रवः ॥

अग्निं न मा मथितं सं दिदीपः प्रचक्षय कृणुहि वस्यसो नः ।

अथा हि ते मद आ सोम मन्ये रेवानिद्व प्रचरा पुष्टिमच्छ ॥

'This Soma juice which washes off all sins, and bestows unmatchable success, which I have drunk, has enthused my organs so well like the bullocks yoked to a chariot; let the Soma protect me; may the Soma prevent me from a fall in my character; let the Soma keep me free from diseases. The Soma will surely turn me into a glorious personality like the fire that has been enkindled. Soma, give me correct insight; maintain my enthusiasm; O, Soma, I always feel to be swimming in prosperity when I am full with delight conferred by you. May you continue this my happiness forever.'

(R. 8-48-5 & 6)

It will be noted that these prayers expressing the desire and anxiety never to fall in character, and to shine in prowess for ever, are from the eighth Mandala of the Rig-Veda, and not from the first or the tenth Mandala which are considered to be later in age. It cannot be argued that the references are not from the earlier part of the Vedas. Those who think that moral and spiritual thoughts are not found in the earlier Mandals of the Veda will note the following quotations which repudiate their theories. The objection that the Vedic people ask for nothing else except progeny and wealth can also be met by these quotations.

- “ 1. अस्मे धेहि श्रवो बृहत् ।
2. अतारिष्म तमसस्परं ।
3. त्वं नः पाहि अंहसः ।
4. युयुतामतिम् ।
5. मा व एनो अन्यकृतं भुजेम ।
6. मा नो मर्ता अभि ब्रुहन् ।
7. मा तत्कर्म वसवो यच्चयध्वे । ”

‘Give us great reputation’ (R. 8-65-9); ‘May we cross the ocean of ignorance’ (R. I-183-6); ‘May you protect us from all sins’ (R. 7-15-15); ‘May you remove the dullness of our intellect’ (R. 8-18-11); ‘May not we have the curse of paying for the sins of others’ (R. 6-51-17); ‘May not human beings despise us’ (R. 1-5-10); ‘O God, may not such actions which invite Your displeasure and wrath be committed by us at any time’ (R. 6-51-7).

It was a conviction of the Vedic people that the omnipotent God kept an eye over the actions of men. This is expressed by the Vedic seer in hymn 2-27-3 where he says, ‘The Almighty God resides in the heart of man and witnesses his good and bad actions.’

“ अन्तः पश्यन्ति वृजिनोत साधु । ”

In the tenth Mandala the Vedic sage tells us of the current belief about the course and consequences of evil life of individuals. He says, ‘The hell has been created by such condemnable people like a forlorn woman going astray or a vicious wife hating her husband, and the dishonest cheats in the society’ (R. 10-125-4).

अभ्रातरो न योषणोत्यन्तः पतिरिषो न जनयो दुरेवाः ।

पापासः सन्तो अनृता असत्या इदं पदमजनता गभीरम् ॥

‘O Aditya, may you wash off all our sins’ (R. 8-18-10); ‘The sinful can never cross the path of truth’ (R. 9-73-6); ‘Whatever sins we have committed may all those be liquidated by this devout surrender to the Almighty’ (R. 6-51-8); ‘O God Varuna, what prompts a man to commit sins is not his human sense or force, but the destiny which brought him to life. Naturally, therefore, wine, passion, gambling and false knowledge all of

which tempt a man are indeed the agents of his bad luck' (R. 7-86-6).

- “ 1. आदिह्यासो युयोतना नो अंहसः ।
 2. ऋतस्य पन्थां न तरति दुष्कृतः ।
 3. कृतं चिदेनो नमसा विवासे ।
 4. न स स्वो दक्षो वरुण धृतिः सा सुरा मन्युर्विंसीदक्षो अचित्तिः । ”

In the Tenth Mandala a sage expresses his opinion that a man who indulges in eating and drinking alone without offering them to the God and his relatives is indeed a sinner. (R. 10-117-6).

“ नार्थमाणं पुष्यति नो सखायं केदलाखो भवति केवलादी । ”

This is literally repeated in the Gita where Shri Krishna tells us that those who cook their food only for themselves are wretched sinners.

“ भुञ्जते ते त्वर्धं पापा ये पचन्त्यात्मकारणात् । ”

It will be apparent that these moral ideas had already stabilised in the Vedic mind which later on influenced the Bharatiya character and social custom. It is strange that Dr. Ketkar should opine that the Vedas contain no moral precepts.

“ परिहृतवेदना जनो युष्मादत्तस्य वायति । ”

‘Only the man who works hard personally deserves and is capable of enjoying the wealth and happiness conferred by you’ (R. 8-47-6). This is an advice given by the Vedic sage which is equally true in modern conditions. The sages were aware that men aspire for different things but they must strive personally to deserve them. Who can deny that this is not one of the most admirable tenet in social ethics?

Then in the Eighth Mandala the Vedic society has been asked not to kill the innocent cow (R. 8-101-15).

“ मा गा मनागामदिति वधिष्ट । ”

In the Second Mandala the Rishi prays Lord Indra that he should never have the misfortune to depend upon others for a morsel of food (R. 2-28-9).

“ माहं राजन्नन्यकृतेन भोजम् । ”

In the Third Mandala a Rishi prays the Almighty to transform the entire world into a truthful place (R. 3-30-6).

“ विश्वं सत्यं कृणुहि । ”

There is for ever a competition between truth and falsehood through speech but the Somadev protects and defends only the truth and destroys the falsehood (R. 7-104-12).

“ सचासच्च वचसी पस्पृधाते । तयोर्यत्सत्यं यतरदजीयस्तदित् सोमोऽवति हन्यासत् । ”

It is for the above reason that the Vedic poet invokes his deity to make the path of truth easy for him (R. 8-31-13).

“ सुगा ऋतस्य पन्थाः । ”

He desires that wine, woman, gambling and evil thoughts which lead a man astray, should not touch his heart (R. 7-86-6).

“ सुरा मन्युर्विभीदको भवित्तिः (अनृतस्य प्रयोता) । ”

The poet unreservedly confesses that at times even a dream plunges a man into sinful thoughts (R. 7-86-6).

“ स्वप्नश्चने अनृतस्य प्रयोता । ”

In general, it is the constant burden of the Vedic prayers seeking the guidance of the gods to the right path which will lead their lives to perfection (R. 5-51-15).

“ स्वस्ति पन्थामनुचरेम । ”

These are a very small number of references picked up at random from the vast store of thoughts and ideals recorded in the early Vedic literature. In the face of the above mentioned expressions, it is difficult to accept the allegation that the Vedic age had no moral outlook beyond indulgence in material pleasures. The Vedic people while they fully enjoyed the physical pleasures of life were never lost or fallen in moral stature and personal and social character, as the very basis of their social structure was highly ethical. A close study of references like those mentioned above will bring conviction that the Vedic people were not barbarous and primitive attached only to their cattle, property, and children, but were so highly civilised and morally sensitive that they disliked sins even in dreams and prayed their gods to save them from such disdainful mishaps. It must have been noted that one poet, who must have tried his utmost to

restrain himself thoughtfully from falling into the vicious traps, but had failed, blames his fate for his fall. So conscious was he of his misdoings. What more evidence is wanted to throw light upon the highly developed social and individual life of the Vedic people?

The Vedic Aryas though they enjoyed all creature comforts were not materialistic. They hated all those who held such a view of life. What Kalidas describes as the character of the Kings of the Raghu dynasty was more true in the case of the earlier Vedic Aryas. They had risen above individualism and adopted the social outlook which provoked in them a condemnation of the wealth which was not useful for the good of the society. We get the following very startling thoughts in the Tenth Mandala.

न वा ऊ देवाः क्षुधसिद्धं ददुरुताशितमुपगच्छन्ति मृत्युवः ।

उतोरायिः पृणतो नोप दस्यत्युतापृणन् मार्डितारं न विन्दन्ते ॥ १ ॥

'The gods do not will that men should die of starvation; for we see that even those who indulge in too much feeding, the gormands and gluttons, do not escape death. Does anybody who feeds the hungry become the poorer for that? His wealth does not get exhausted on this account. On the other hand one who tries to spare his wealth by denying food to the hungry will find himself totally abandoned in distressed conditions here in this world or in heaven after death!'

A. Ludwing in his 'Der Regweda' has offered an excellent gloss on this verse. He explains: 'What the poet says that it is the violation of the command of the Gods to deny food to the hungry it is said in a sarcastic tone. The poet wants to expose the cunning pretensions of those cruel hypocrites who justify their inhuman conduct with a silly argument like 'the Gods have predetermined the destiny of the hungry and the starved and it is a crime to violate his desire'. This is apparent from what the poet says in conclusion: 'If it be the divine will that the poor should die of starvation, then certainly it follows that the rich should become immortal. But it is not so says the poet.'

य आधाय चक्रमानाय पित्वोऽन्नवान् सन् रफिता योपजग्मुषे ।

स्थिरं मनः कृणुते सेवते पुरोतो वित्समर्दितारं न विन्दते ॥

2. 'Bear in mind that a person who indulges in feeding himself in front of a hungry person who is knocking at the door for a morsel of food, will never find a hand to lift him up from inevitable fall;

स इत् भोजो यो गृह्वे ददाल्लनकामायचरते कृशाय ।

अरमस्मै भवति यामहृता उतापरिषु कृणुते सखायम् ॥

3. 'The man who offers food to the hungry who is dying for it, is indeed a noble creature. He has verily accomplished all sorts of sacrifices; he has surely secured a devoted friend by his action;

न स सखा यो न ददाति सख्ये सचाऽभुवे सचमानाय पितृः ।

अपास्मात्प्रेयान्न तदोकोऽस्ति पृणन्तमन्यमरणं चिदिच्छेत् ॥

4. 'One who does not invite or welcome a friend or a close acquaintance cannot be considered a friend; it is better to be away from such a person. His house does not deserve to be called a house of a householder; one should rather find out some one else as a companion who will be generous in friendship and food.

पृणीयादिन्नाधमानायनव्यान् द्राघीयांसमनुपश्येत् पन्थाम् ।

ओ हि वर्तन्ते रथ्येव चक्रान्यमन्यमुपतिष्ठन्त रायः ॥

5. 'A man of property should please friends and the needy with the offer of food. One should not lose sight of the road which leads to the journey's end. The wheels of a chariot which moves go on changing from point to point on the path; so also wealth is fickle and chooses to change its habitation from person to person;

मोघमन्नं विन्दते अग्रऽचेताः सत्यं ब्रवीमि वध इत्स तस्य ।

नार्यमाणं पुष्यतिनो सखायं केवलाघोभवति केवलाशी ॥

6. 'The man who does not behave according to the above prescriptions has indeed strived in vain to collect and hoard food; that is no food at all but virtually his poison; for he who eats without sharing with his friends becomes a sinner;

कृषन्नित्काल आक्षितं कृणोतियन्नध्वानमपवृद्धे चरित्रैः

वदन्ब्रह्माऽवदतोबनीयान् पृणन्नपि स्पृणन्तमभिस्त्यात् ॥

7. 'The plough helps us to reaping a rich harvest of corn if one takes it to the field; so also a benevolent person shows

the way of happiness to others by his own labour and good deeds. It is better for a learned man to be useful to the ignorant than to be completely reserved and tongue-tied; so is the case of a man who has food to offer and offers it; he is no doubt a nobler person than the one who denies it to the needy; he will always be better off than the miserly fellow who shuts his treasures and denies;

एकपाद्भूयो द्विपदो वि चक्रमे द्विपात् त्रिपादमभ्वेति पश्चात् ।

चतुष्पादेति द्विपादमभिस्वरे संपश्यन् पंक्तीरुपतिष्ठमानः ॥

(Rigwed. 10)

9. 'The two hands though they look alike, cannot do the same work. A child may have two mothers but both do not feed the same affection for it; nor can both feed the child on their breasts' milk; a woman may have twins but they are never equal in their capacities. So also the children born in the same noble family may not all turn out equally noble.'

समौ चिद्धस्तौ न समं विविष्टः समातरा चित्रं समं दुहाते ।

यमयोश्चित्रं समा वीर्याणि ज्ञाती चित्सन्तौ न समं पृणीतः ॥

(Rigwed. 10, 117-1-9)

A little consideration of the above verses will convince us that herein lie the origin of the basic concepts of the Hindu society. It is difficult therefore to allege in face of such hymns that the Vedic Aryas were devoid of moral thoughts and behaviour. Dr. Ketkar was so checkmated by the above hymn that he was constrained to add a ludicrous note that excepting in this hymn there is no mention of ethical ideas anywhere else in the Rig-Veda. To him this hymn appears to be a strange occurrence in the Rig-Veda. For a scholar like Dr. Ketkar who otherwise strongly advocates that the Vedas mean the four Vedas and the study must comprise of all the four as a single book, it does not behave to look at the Veda in this unaccountable manner. This is not a solitary hymn bearing upon the ethical thoughts of the Vedic people. The defence of morals, the yearning for right behaviour, high regard for purity of character, and a sincere aspiration not to think of, much less to behave, in a depraved and false manner, even in dreams, have been noted in innumerable hymns which beyond any shadow of doubt

prove the high conception of the Vedic Rishis in regard to social and personal behaviour and the ethical values of life. It is not merely stray philosophical slogans which disclose this uncompromising regard for truth but the realistic records of long and sustained legends also point to the same fact. Let us turn for instance to the famous legend of 'Sarma and the Panis'.

'Brihaspati was the purohit of Indra. He possessed a rich Ranch of cattle. The Panis once lifted away the cows of Brihaspati and hid them in the caves of a mountain well screened and defended. This theft was narrated to Indra by Brihaspati and the latter prevailed upon him to search his stolen treasure of the cattle. Indra sent his fond and trusted watch-bitch Sarma to trace the cows. Sarma travelled far and wide. She crossed the river Rasa and reached the land of the Panis. Combing the whole region she traced the place where the cows were concealed by the Panis. When they saw her they became suspicious about the movements of this strange visitor. They asked her to disclose her identity, wherefrom and why she had gone to that distant land. The dialogue between the Panis and Sarma has been literally recorded in the Rig-Veda. This piece is one of the finest samples of a literary dialogues which can stand as high as any if not better in the recorded dialogues in the world.

The wily Panis ask Sarma: 'What brings you here O Sarma? What a long distance you have walked over? Are you not exhausted? It is strange that you did not feel frightened? And where did you pass your night? This river Rasa is so frightfully over-flooded and what wonder how you crossed the river? How did you do it?

Sarma answered: 'O Panis, I am a messenger of the Lord Indra; Lord Indra is there at my back to protect me always and everywhere; I have never had the occasion to be afraid of anything; nor will there be any fear for me in future. And about this river Rasa, O, I crossed her so easily'.

Panis further asked: 'O Sarma, who and how is that Indra, whose servant or spy, you say, you are? Will he come here to our country? Will you lead him here? What is his attitude?

किम् इच्छन्ती सरमा प्र इदम् आनद् दूरे हि अध्वा जगुरिः पराचैः ।

का अस्मेऽहिनिः का परिऽतक्म्या आसीत् कथं रसायाः अतरः पर्यासि ॥

Sarma: 'How can I describe the prowess of that Indra to you, O Panis? If you want to know the truth, listen. There is none in the world who can vanquish Indra. He is so powerful as to overpower anyone.

इन्द्रस्य दूतीः इषिता चरामि महः इच्छन्ती पणयः निऽधीन् वः ।

अतिऽस्कन्दः भियसा तत् नः आवत् तथा रसाया अतरम् पर्यासि ॥

Panis: 'Can your Indra conquer us?

कीदृङ् इन्द्रः सरमे का दृशीका यस्य इदं दूतीः असरः पराकात् ।

आ च गच्छात् मित्रम् एन दधाम अथ गवाम् गोऽपतिः नः भवति ॥

Sarma: 'O, most certainly. What are you before him? He will destroy you, in no time, yes he will reduce you to the ground. O Panis, do not think of giving a fight; in that you will lose your lives!

न अहं तं वेद द्रभ्यं दभत् सः यस्य इदं दूतीः असरम् पराकात् ।

न तम् गूहन्ति स्ववतः गभीराः हताः इन्द्रेण पणयः शयध्वे ॥

Panis: 'Yes, Sarma, but the cows which you want, who can take them away without giving a fight? Who could take them away from us without defeating us? And is there any one who can stand in the battle-field before us? What do you think of us O Sarma? Our weapons are very sharp and hard. What, will your Indra dare to harm us?

इमाः गावः सरमे याः ऐच्छः परि दिवः अन्तात् सुऽभगे पतन्ती ।

कः ते एनाः अव सृजात् अयुध्वी उत अस्माकम् आयुधा सन्ति तिरमा ॥

Sarma: 'O Panis, why do you brag like women? You are no doubt wagging like a guilty person and I am sure you will forget all your boast when the hour comes.

असेन्या वः पणयः क्वांसि अनिषव्याः तन्वः सन्तु पापीः ।

अधृष्टः वः एन वै अस्तु पन्थाः बृहस्पतिः वः इभया न मृळात् ॥ ६ ॥

Panis: 'O Sarma, we shall see what happens when Indra comes here. You do not know that our River Rasa is so unfordable that even your Indra will not dare to swim and reach this end of the current.

अयम् निऽधिः सरमे अद्रिऽबुध्नः गोभि अश्वेभिः वसुऽभिः निऽक्रष्टः ।

रक्षन्ति तम् पणयः ये सुऽगोपाः रेकु पदम् अलकम् आ जगन्थ ॥ ७ ॥

Sarma: 'You fools of Panis! You are under what impression I do not know. Nothing can obstruct the march of Indra, how can your Rasa stop him?

Hearing this undaunted description of her master's valour, the Panis were overcome with fear. They now conspire to win over Sarma by persuasions and temptations. With that object they say to her:—

आ इह गमन् ऋषयः सोमऽक्षिताः अयास्यः अङ्गिरसः नवऽग्वाः ।

ते एतम् ऊर्वम् वि भजन्त गोनाम् अथ एतत् दक्षः पणयः दमन् इत् ॥

Panis: 'Dear Sarma! Listen to us. If you do what we desire, we shall surely raise you to the height of fortune.

On this Sarma tells the Panis to first hear what she has to deliver to them. Then she advises them to release the cows of Indra and secure his friendship if they desired their lives to be spared. She warns them not to invite death on their race by enraging Indra. She repeats that the Rasa howsoever impassable could not prevent Indra and Brihaspati who will surely cross over and come to destroy the Panis. But the Panis are adamant. They argue further.

एव च त्वम् सरमे आऽजगन्ध प्रऽबादिता सहसा दैव्येन ।

स्वसारम् वा कृण्वै मा पुनः गाः अपते गवाम् सुऽभगे भजाम ॥ ९ ॥

Panis: 'Rasa is not the only hurdle, O Sarma, look to these our mountain-hide-outs. This fort is impregnable. The fort is well provided with all provisions, cows, cattle, horses, food, and wealth; and our heroic soldiers, these hordes of Panis are standing guard all day and night with powerful weapons in their hands to protect our treasures. In vain is this your trip to such a distant and dangerous land. What can your Brihaspati and Indra do to us, possessed of such fine strength? Forget not, that we are not only prosperous and rich, but strong and firm and they cannot stand before us.

न अहम् वेद भ्रातृऽत्वम् नो(इति) स्वसृत्वम् इन्द्रः विदुः अङ्गिरसः च घोराः ।

गोऽकामाः मे अच्छदयन् यत् आयम् अप अतः इत पणयः दरीयः ॥ १० ॥

Sarma: 'Truly has it been said that the sinners never see reason. Your bragging and boast only fore-tells that the hour of destruction is fast approaching. If you do not release these cows, remember that the brave Ayasya, Angiras and Navagva

inspired by the Soma drinks will march here and will totally vanquish you. Then they will take the cows and distribute them amongst themselves.

The Panis hearing what Sarma had said observe to her: 'Leave all that aside for a while, O Sarma. The question of the fight comes only when you return and tell them about the cows and bring them here, no? We are indeed not afraid of all that. But dear Sarma, we are really affected by the trouble and hardships that you have to undergo. You have already undergone a lot of trouble in coming here. And now you talk of returning back. We cannot really imagine what will be your lot. Instead of all this we really adopt you as our dear sister. We request you to stay here with us, we indeed love you like a sister. You are no doubt wise, and will comply with our request. Is it not happier to stay with us in peace and pleasure, rather than suffer all those hardships and troubles for the sake of Indra?

Sarma: 'What, you Panis want me as your sister?

Panis: 'Yes, why, what is wrong? Discard that Indra who exploits you and inflicts such trouble on you; why not stay with us here in full happiness and plenty; without the least labour and hardship?

Sarma: 'You wily Panis, it is strange that you consider me to be so simpleton as to be fooled by your deceptive and sweet talk. What is there in you to compare to Indra? I know Indra well and now you too.

Panis: 'Sarma, we do not consider you merely our sister, we shall really share these cows with you. You will have your share in them.

Sarma: 'You fools, Panis, you shut up this nonsense. I do not like to be your sister, I do not want to call you brothers. Only Indra and Angiras know what I am. I tell you once for all finally. I will go back to Indra, tell him all about this; and my gods will come here to take away the cows which you have carried away from them. They will destroy you first, and then remove the cows. If now you love your lives and wish to save them, then the only course is to release these cows and depart from here. That alone will be for your good!'

दूरम् इत पणयः वरीयः उत गावः यन्तु मिनतीः ऋतेन ।

बृहस्पतिः या अविन्दत् निऽगूळ्हाः सोमः ग्रावाणः ऋषयः च विप्राः ॥ ११ ॥

The legend is illustrative of the general virtue of loyalty and integrity. Even a member of the canine class is shown to be so above temptation. It is indeed unjustifiable to accuse the people of depravity of character or want of morals or ethical sense. What else is moral if not what Sarma illustrates by her noble conduct!

There is thus a positive expression and illustration of faith in the moral values of life. There is also an unequivocal condemnation of immorality and depravity of character in innumerable tales and legends in the Rig-Veda. Vice though not inconspicuous has been invariably the subject of censure. So many of the famous legends are narrated only to hold to shame and censure the vices which bring about the fall of man. There is a soliloquy of a gambler who has fallen to the very brink of total ruin. The gambler narrates his own tale of woes and shame in the 34th hymn of the tenth Mandal of the Rig-Veda. The whole hymn is full of such pathos and presents the picture of the gambler in such a vivid reality that the piece has been admired to be highly estimable in literary value. The gambler says:—

प्रावेपाः मा बृहतः मादयन्ति प्र वातेऽजाः इरिणे वृद्धतानाः ।

सोमस्यऽऽव मौजऽवनस्थ भक्षः विऽभीदकः जागृविः मह्यं अच्छान् ॥ १ ॥

‘These wooden pieces made from the branches of trees that have survived storms and tempests, which dance on this gambling board, make me almost mad. I am turned as mad and insensible as if I were intoxicated by the juice of Soma growing on the mount Mounja.

न मा मिमेथ न जिहीठे एषा शिवा सखिऽभ्यः उत मह्यं आसीत् ।

भक्षस्य अहं एकऽपरस्य हेतोः अनुऽव्रतां अप जायां अरोधम् ॥ २ ॥

2. ‘Here is my dear wife. Never has she said an angry word to me nor has she ever chafed at me. She has been so pleasing to me and my friend. With all this without any fault of hers I have been so unkind to her and have abandoned her under the evil influence of this vice of gambling.

द्वेष्टि श्वश्रूः अप जाया इणद्धि न नाथितः विन्दते मर्डितारम् ।

अश्वस्यऽइव जरतः वस्यस्य न अहं विन्दामि कितवस्य भोगम् ॥ ३ ॥

3. 'First the mother-in-law of a gambler begins to despise him; then even his own wife abhors him. Then of course all the supplications of the gambler have no effect. Nobody pities him or loves him. Such has become my plight. I am reduced to the condition of a pedigree horse that has gone old and useless. Now-a-days I have been unable to enjoy the pleasures of life also.

अन्ये जायां परिमृशन्ति अस्य अगृधत् वेदने वाजी अक्षः ।

पिता माता भ्रातरः एनं आहुः न जानीमः नयत बद्धम् एनम् ॥ ४ ॥

4. 'When that mighty trap of gambling deprives a man of his wealth, then undesirable persons begin to molest the wife of the gambler. Even your own father, brother, mother forget you and do not acknowledge the relation. They refuse to own you and permit you to be snapped away with hands and feet tied fast.

यत आऽदीव्ये न दविषाणि एभिः परायत्ऽभ्यः अथ हीये सखिभ्यः ।

निऽउत्पाः च बभ्रवः वाचं अकृत एमि इत् एषां निऽकृतं जारिणीऽइव ॥ ५ ॥

5. 'Then I make a vow to myself that I will not gamble in future. But when I find that the old friends in the den and the gambling dice begin to laugh at me; and condemn me; and when I hear the inviting jingle of the gambling pieces rolling on the board, I loose my self-control and run to the den, like a bad woman visiting the appointed place.

सभां एति कितवः पृच्छमानः जेष्यामि इति तन्वा शशुजानः ।

अक्षसः अस्य वि तिरन्ति कामं प्रतिऽदीव्ये दधतः आकृतानि ॥ ६ ॥

6. 'What shall I do? When they ask me to go, some spirit enters my body; I become impatient, dress myself and rush to the game. I shout stakes and the gambling pieces whet the greed more and more.

अक्षसः इत् अंकुशिनः निऽतोदिनः निऽकृतवानः तपनाः तापयिष्णवः ।

कुमारऽदेष्णाः जयतः पुनऽहनः मब्धा संऽपृक्ताः कितवस्य वर्हणा ॥ ७ ॥

7. 'These gambling pieces are so sharp pointed; they prick me; they shear my skin; with me they burn the skins of others also. With all this suffering, if some time I win and gain the

stakes, the gain is so trifling that it cannot purchase even the toys of children. So treacherous are the cheats of these pieces of dice which first trap the weak mind and then ruin him completely.

त्रिऽपञ्चासः क्रीळति व्रातः एषां देवऽइव सविता सत्यऽधर्मा ।

उग्रस्य चित् मन्थवे न नमन्ते राजा चित् एभ्यः नमः इत कृणोति ॥ ८ ॥

8. 'The game is played in threes and fifties. The show is so truthful in appearance as if the bright Sun has descended on earth. The gambling lowers one and all strong and weak. Even the kings bend before the gambling dice.

नीचा वर्तन्ते उपरि स्फुरन्ति अहस्तासः हस्तऽवन्तं सहन्ते ।

दिव्याः अंगाराः इरिणे निऽउत्पाः शीताः संतः हृदयं निःदहन्ति ॥ ९ ॥

9. 'These dice roll down on the floor but bend the heads of men; they have no hands but they defeat men who have them; when they are thrown on the board they glow like luminous bodies. Cool in touch to the hands, they indeed scorch the heart of the player.

जाया तप्यते कितवस्य हीना माता पुत्रस्य चरतः क्व स्वित् ।

ऋणऽवा विभ्यत् धनं इच्छमानः अन्येषां अस्तं उप नक्तं एति ॥ १० ॥

10. 'Miserable wife of a gambler weeps for her lot; his mother mourns the forlorn wanderings of her son; the gambler himself who has turned a debtor becomes nervous. What else could he do except to knock at the doors of this one and that?

स्त्रियं दृष्ट्वाय कितवं तताप अन्येषां जायां सुऽकृतं च योनिम् ।

पूर्वाह्णे अश्वान् युयुजे हि बभ्रून् सः अग्नेः अन्ते वृषलः पपाद ॥ ११ ॥

11. 'The gambler now is wrecked to such a mental condition that he does not like to see his own wife. He begins to chafe at her when she comes in sight. Not only that; when he comes across the wife or the house of some one in a fine decorated condition he feels mortally smarting and he begins to burn with jealousy. But what is the go for him? He yokes his smoky slumbering pony to ply his cart in the morning and then sit by the fire in the night like a helpless wretch.

यः वः सेनाऽनीः महतः गणस्य राजा व्रातस्य प्रथमः बभूव ।

तस्मै कृणोमि न धना रुणधि दश अहं प्राचीः तत् ऋतं वदामि ॥ १२ ॥

12. 'I fold my hands and pray before the Captain of your

mighty tribe, before your Chief, and the King. I say on oath that I have not been able to rob others' wealth in the gambling.

मक्षैः मा दीव्यः कृषिं इत् कृषस्व वित्ते रमस्व बहु मन्यमानः ।

तत्र गावः कितव तत्र जाया तत् मे विचष्टे सविता अयं अर्यः ॥ १३ ॥

13. 'Do not play with the dice. Better engage yourself in the field in agriculture. You will gain wealth and joy in it. That way will you raise to a high position and honour. There in agriculture you will get cows; you will have loving wife and your home will be happy. I have been taught these things by experience by the blessings of the Lord Sun.

मित्रं कृणुष्वं खलु मृळत नः माः नः घोरेण चरत अभि धृष्णु ।

नि षः नु मन्युः विशतां मरतिः अन्यः ब्रम्हणां प्रसितौ नु अस्तु ॥१४॥

14. 'Treat me as a friend. O Dice, have mercy on us. Do not please overpower us by your hectic attack. O Dice, be you pacified with me; be kind and release me from your clutches, let any one else, a sinner, fall victim to your temptations and trap.'

The Vedic Aryas held in total contempt social vices like gambling, drinking, debauchery, etc. They were always careful not to fall into the mire of temptations of these debasing vices. If inadvertently someone was caught into the trap, he would always be conscious of his fall, would repent for his blunders, and try to extricate himself from the grips of the wine, woman and the dice. The Gambler's hymn quoted above is a clear picture of the society in the Vedic times. Side-by-side the degradation of the gambler, it also throws sufficient light upon the relations of man and his wife, friends, strangers and their wives, as well as the mother-in-law. It reveals what great pangs the gambler was going through at the introspection of his fall and how intently he was vowing to come back to normal life. If in face of such categorical instances, we see some honest and majority of other perverted intellectuals labouring to propound that the Vedic people had not yet evolved the moral laws, or argue against all positive evidence that they, who were afraid of sins even in dreams as we have shown, did not know nor observe the bonds of ethics of a civilised society, we regret to observe, either they have not studied the Vedas seriously or are actuated by some other motive. It is highly

objectionable that they should try to pick up some references out of contexts and put absolutely mischievous or unwarranted meanings on them which no Vedic scholar would for a moment accept. Look for instance, what Shri Dange says below:—

‘Such an organism knew no differentiated kins, entailing defined sex interdictions. But this promiscuity was found to be injurious to the growth of the progeny. Hence the first prohibition that was thought of and applied to, was to relations between parents and offspring and brought into existence the consanguine family. Here the marriages are arranged by generations; all grandfathers and grandmothers are mutually husbands and wives; equally their children, the fathers and mothers, in this brother and sister, male and female cousins are mutually husbands and wives.

‘The second stage was the creation of a barrier between brother and sister. This progress was much more difficult because of the greater equality of ages of the parties concerned. It was accomplished gradually beginning with the natural sister on the mother’s side. How difficult it was can be seen from the fact that late in the Rig-Veda, Yami, the sister of Yama, asks for his love and progeny on her; but he refuses saying that the watchman of the God Varuna would see and be angry. Yami argues on the contrary that the Gods would approve of it. The end of this drama in the Rig-Veda is lost but even if the conclusion is presumed that Yama ultimately refused, it points to the difficulty with which the earlier custom was fought out.’

The trouble is Dange has been endeavouring to understand and interpret the Rig-Veda in terms of Marxian view of historical evolution of human society. He has been labouring to bring the Rig-Veda within the range of application of the theories propounded in the ‘Origin of Marriage’ by his master Engels. This thesis of Engels has not been universally accepted as wholly true. Assuming without admitting Engels’ hypothesis, it does not follow that it stands true in respect of the life in the Rig-Vedic age. Even assuming for a moment that there may have been at some time in the infancy of humanity some such conditions approximating to what Dange has described, it is totally against the mountains of evidence to suggest that

the conditions were prevalent in the Rig-Vedic times. The picture which we get from the few references cited above is certainly not of a society in an undeveloped primitive stage but of one which seems to have a highly civilised social ethic and very progressive principles and practices of social contract. It is very difficult to imagine that a society which went to the battle-fields for the social and cultural conquests of the barbaric contemporaries with a vow to convert them to a moralistic code of conduct of the Aryas could be accused of barbarism. It would be harder still, we repeat, to believe that the people who were afraid of and anxious to avoid the commission of sins even in dreams could be such as deserved to be labelled immoral and primitive.

Coming to the one instance which Dange has chosen to prove his fantastic suggestion, it is necessary to explain the background of the whole legend, to clear off the mischievous interpretation put upon it by him.

In the chapter of Brihad Devata we are told the legend thus: The 'Twashta' had two children, a son by name Tiishiras, and daughter Sarani. In course of time as Sarani came of age, she was given in marriage to Vivasvan. Out of this wedlock, the twins Yama and Yami were born. They naturally lived together and were brought up in great affection and care. Yama and Yami entered the tempting youth. The frailty in the woman became uncontrollable. One night Yami blind with passion, entreated her brother to satisfy her lust. Yama whose very name stands for self-control, could not think of such an incestuous conduct even in dream. He repudiates his sister strongly and prevails on her successfully to abandon the immoral pleasure. The whole dialogue is worth studying as it shows contrary to the conclusion drawn by Dange the very high level of social code that had already been recognised and stabilised in the then Vedic society. Let us then look at the dialogue:

ओ (इति) चित् सखायं सदया ववृष्यां तिरः पुरुचित् अर्णवं जजन्वात् ।

पितुः नपातं आ दधीत वेधाः अघि क्षमि प्रस्तरमे वीभ्यानः ॥ १ ॥

Yami: I will surely attract my lover to my heart. My love, he may try to escape beyond the reach of my love, but

the Omnipotent God who looks to all things will certainly give him a son and make him a father.

न ते सखा सख्यम् वष्टि एतत् सऽलक्ष्मा यत् विषुऽरूपा भवाति ।

महः पुत्रासः असुरस्य वीराः दिवः धर्तारः उर्विया परिष्यन् ॥ २ ॥

Yama : I am no doubt your dear companion, but I cannot even imagine of such companionship between you and me that will change our relation of brother and sister into that of husband and wife...

उशन्ति घ ते अमृतासः एतत् एकस्य चित् लजसम् मर्त्यस्य ।

नि ते मनः मनसि धायि अस्मे (इति) जन्युः पतिः तन्वम् आ विविदयः ॥ ३ ॥

Yami : The immortal gods about whom you talk really desire that man should not live alone but should have some partner in life. You have surely an affection for me; then why not you mate with me as a husband and have a son from me.

न यत् पुरा चक्रुम कत् ह नूनम् ऋताः वदन्तः अनृतं रपेय ।

गन्धर्वः अप्सु अप्या च योषा सः नः नाभिः परमम् जामि तत् नौ ॥ ४ ॥

Yama : Listen, what we have never done, what has never been heard of by us why should we do such an abominable deed? We talked of true and moral life in tall terms so far, why should there be this indulgence now in immoral talk and behaviour? Remember, the Gandharva that pervades in the divine waters is our father and the divine water itself is our mother, such is the noble tie that binds us.

गर्भे तु नौ जनिता (दम्पती इति) दंऽपती कः देवः त्वष्टा सविता विश्वऽरूपः ।

नकिः अस्य प्रमिनन्ति व्रतानि वेद नौ अस्य पृथिवी उत द्यौः ॥ ५ ॥

Yami : No, really speaking, the father of the universe when he put us together in the womb, has already destined us to become husband and wife. Why should then we transgress the divine will? Both the Sky and the Earth know that we are born husband and wife.

कः अस्य वेद प्रथमस्य अहः कः ई ददर्श कः इह प्र वोचत् ।

वृहत् मित्रस्य वरुणस्य धाम कत् ऊं (इति) ब्रवः आहनः वीच्या नृन् ॥ ६ ॥

Yama : Who knows what happened on that first day of our birth? Who has ever seen that incident? Who can vouch that he had seen that? You do not know how splendid is the

shining sphere of God Varuna? You lustful woman, the curseful temptation of youth in man, stop this your lewd talk. What are you raving?

यमस्य मा यम्यम् कामः आ अगन् समाने योनौ सहऽश्रेय्याय ।

जायाऽइव पत्ये तन्वम् रिरिच्यां विः चित्बृहेव रथ्याऽइव चक्रा ॥ ७ ॥

Yami : O, how I long to sit in embrace with Yama, to sleep with him, in the same couch; that is the strong passion that makes me rave like this. Here I will show my beauteous body to you as a woman does to her husband. Let us run to each other's arms like the wheels that roll.

न तिष्ठन्ति न नि सिषन्ति एते देवानां स्पशः इह ये चरन्ति ।

अन्येन मत् आहनः याहि तूयं तेन वि बृह रथ्याऽइव चक्रा ॥ ८ ॥

Yama : Pooh, pooh! Hear me; the angels of Gods do not stand in one place or fall asleep. You lewd bitch get away from sight, run to some other fellow like a wheel and fall in his arms.

रात्रीभिः अस्मै अहऽभिः दशस्येत् सूर्यस्य चक्षुः मुहुः उत मिमीयात् दिवा ।

पृथिव्याः मिथुना (सबन्धू इति) सऽबन्धू यमी यमस्य भिभ्यात् अजामि ॥ ९ ॥

Yami : Who will bring him to my arms to stay with me day and night? Will the Sun's eye see to what I want? Here I see, the sky and the earth bound by the ties as man and wife! May it not happen that this Yami also gets bound to Yama in the same tie of man and wife?

आ घ ता गच्छान् उत्तरा युगानि यत्र जामयः कृणवन् अजामि ।

उप बर्हृहि वृषभाय बाहुं अन्यं इच्छस्व सुऽभगे पतिं मत् ॥ १० ॥

Yama : That evil time will come in future but this is not the age for such incestuous conduct. May you lend the pillow of your arm to some brave hero. O blessed woman, may you entertain a desire for some other man but not me. May you desire for some other man for your husband.

किं भ्राता अस्त यत् अनाथम् भवति किं ऊं(इति) स्वसा यत् निऽकृतिः निऽगच्छात् ।

कामऽमृता बहु एतत् रपामि तन्वा मे तन्वम् सम् पिपृग्धि ॥ ११ ॥

Yami : He is indeed no brother who forsakes his sister. I am indeed fired with a passion which makes me rave like this; therefore O Yama come and embrace me.

न वै ऊं (इति) ते तन्वा तन्वम् सं पृच्छ्यां पापम् आदुः यः स्वसारम् निगच्छात् ।
अन्येन मत् प्रमुदः कल्पयस्व न ते भ्राता सुभगे वष्टि एतत् ॥ १२ ॥

Yama : Get thee gone; you cursed lady—I will' never allow you to touch my body. One who does this and approaches his sister for this, is the most depraved and fallen fellow. O good girl, may you desire for some other man and not me. May you get full pleasure from him. I am your brother. How can I think of giving or deriving such base pleasure from a sister? No, no, I shudder to think of this.

वतः वत असि यम न एव ते मनः हृदयं च अविदाम ।

अन्या किल त्वां कक्ष्याऽइव युक्त्वा परि स्वजाने लिबुजाऽइव वृक्षम् ॥ १३ ॥

Yami : O cruel fate—You are indeed cruel like death. I never imagined that your mind and heart are so stone-like. But now it is useless to lament. May some other woman at least embrace you like a creeper round a tree or a garland round the neck.

अन्यं ऊं (इति) सु त्वं यमि अन्यः ऊं (इति) त्वां परि स्वजाते लिबुजाऽइव वृक्षम् ।

तस्य वा त्वं मनः इच्छ सः वा तव अध कृणुष्व संऽविदम् सुभद्राम् ॥ १४ ॥

Yama : That is very good, O Yami, I beseech, you will now choose some other young man for your husband. He will hold you fast as a tree bears a creeper. May you succeed in attracting his heart and he will also do the same. Thus should you enjoy the pleasures of life with your husband. That will bring to you real happiness.' (Rig. 10-10-1-14).

A careful reading of this hymn will repudiate all the baseless hypothesis of Dange. The expression 'like a wife embracing her husband' is a categorical illustration of how high was the sense and notion of the relation between husband and wife brought together by a marriage which had been stabilised by the 'Sanskara' in the Vedic life. Had that idea of wedlock been not a current one—the simile would never have occurred to, nor been used in such a facile manner in literature. The arguments of Yami leave no doubt that though she longed for incestuous union, she knew full well that there was social sin in it and that was not the current social conduct between brothers and sisters. It is a different thing that in her uncontrolled condition of fired passion she asks for something, but

that was even in her full knowledge contrary to morals and laws. If what Dange says were the condition of the society then, the words would have been man and woman and not husband and wife. Yama would not have denied the request of his sister on the grounds of social custom, or in the alternative he would have certainly stated while denying that whatever might be the conditions before, he was refusing her desire as he wished to set a new and more moralistic social code of behaviour between brother and sister. It is clear therefore that the hymn does not give any support to the hypothesis as suggested by Dange. The verdict of the Vedas on this question is clear beyond any shred of doubt as expressed in the dictum: 'He is a mire of sins who keeps incestuous relation with his sister.'... which point out that the code of social conduct regarding relations between brothers and sisters and the recognition of marriage as an institution in the Vedic age had been crystallised.

Going a little ahead we suggest that the Vedic Rishis had successfully evolved and established the very strict rules of prohibited degrees and relations for the purpose of 'union by marriages'. The words 'Vishurupa' and 'Salakshma' are pointers to the very prescriptions and prohibitions which kept the institution of marriage and the unit of family on the unassailable foundations, which in consequence brought a strength that enabled it to survive through epochs. These regulations which are now considered to be very correct and conducive to healthy growth from the scientific point of view, were brought about by notions engendered in the society through philosophical thought and explanations. The tenth verse observes that men should not commit such abominable sins, for there hover, all over and around are the angels and the spies of God who do not rest for a moment nor wink for a second, but are always alert and watchful and nothing escapes their notice. This device was introduced by the Vedic sages for they feared that however wisely the social codes might have been evolved, man is after all a bundle of base desires and passions. He is heir to the flesh and bones which tempt him to the wrongs and sins. To ward him off the dangerous path he is warned that ever-alert angels are watching him day

and night. No books of laws, not the fear of temporal punishments have ever so much succeeded in preventing a human being from committing sins as the fear of God has successfully done. It is on that account that the great sage Vyas says in Mahabharat: that man may try to deceive the eyes of man by committing sins in darkness but how can he avoid the notice of the 'day, night, the twilights, the Sun and the Moon, the stars and the directions and the Dharma as such, who all are ever watchful like sentries?'

“अहश्च शनिश्च उमे च सन्ध्ये

धर्मश्च जानाति नरस्य वृत्तम् ॥”

A very fine illustrating story is narrated in the Bhagwat. The sage Kashyap was offering his prayers. Just at that twilight hour, his wife Diti who was fired with passion was coaxing him to satisfy her desire. The self-controlled sage reproached her and told her that her brother-in-law Lord Shankar was watching them with all the three eyes at the moment.

“देवन्निभिः पश्यति देवरस्ते ।”

Thus were the base and gross human passions brought under control by the Vedic people with wise codes and conceptions. So high was the ideology of the Vedic people in regard to the code of conduct between man and woman.

We can gather from this dialogue between Yama and Yami the nature of the 'institution of marriage'. There are innumerable other instances to prove the very developed character of the institution which is the basis of any social life. The very words 'Shwashru'—mother-in-law, 'Jaya'—wife, 'Pita', 'Mata', 'Bhratar' and others are clear mile-stones in the growth and evolution of the ideas and idealism of an Arya family which were scientifically so perfect even then as could admit very little changes or corrections in the milleniums which followed. These aspects had come to be stabilised in the social behaviour much before the times when the Vedas came to be composed or compiled. Thus it would be absurd to suggest that the Vedas prove a nomadic and primitive conception of social life admitting only of one distinction of man and woman. Having said this, let us turn to the hymn which directly deals with a marriage.

In the 85th hymn of the 10th Mandal of the Rig-Veda, we come across a very revealing piece. The sage confers upon the newly married couple his hearty blessings and gives his good wishes. In the course of his blessing the couple he says:—

इह प्रियं प्रजया तेसमृध्यतामस्मिन्गृहे गार्हपत्याय जागृहि ।

एना पत्या तन्वं संसृजस्वाधाजित्री विदथमावदाथः ॥ १७ ॥

‘O daughter-in-law, may you bear children here and be happy. It is your function to be alert to see that the household sacrificial fire is always burning, and does not get extinguished. May you be united with this thy husband in body (and mind). May you live long till old age in this house with perfect unity and affection.’

सुमंगलिरियं बधूरिमां समेत पश्यत ।

सौभाग्यमस्मै दत्त्वायाथास्तं वि परेतन ॥ ३३ ॥

The hymn clearly deals with the relation of husband and wife, the transfer of the woman from one house to the other, from her father's to the husband's house, the ultimate end and aim of the ‘institution of marriage’, the inseparableness of the bonds of marriage till old age and death, and the function of the woman to take care of the sacrificial fire in the house. These are all so clearly mentioned that it is a surprise how any intelligent man with open mind and eyes could escape these sentiments and draw contrary conclusions.

गृभ्णामि ते सौभगत्वाय हस्तं मया पत्या जरदष्टिर्यासः ।

भगो अर्यमा सविता पुरन्धिर्मह्यं त्वादुर्गर्हिपत्याय देवाः ॥ ३६ ॥

Very much like our modern times there used to be marriage processions when the bride and the groom were taken out in decoration. People used to assemble and line upon the route of the procession. Someone in the lines is reported to have remarked this to his companions:—

इहैव स्तं मा वियौष्टं विश्वमायुष्यन्तूतम् ।

क्रीळन्तौ पुत्रनप्तृभिः मोदमानौ स्वे गृहे ॥ ४२ ॥

‘See this auspicious good bride, have a look at her, give her your blessings before you repair to your homes. The sanctity that was attached to this sacrament of marriage in the Vedic society can be very well measured by what a groom

has to declare at the time of accepting the hand of the bride. The groom says:

इमां त्वमिन्द्रमीदृः सुपुत्रां सुभगां कृणु ।

दशास्यां पुत्रानाधेहि पतिमेकादशं कृधि ॥

'O good one, here I take your hand for my good fortune; may you associate with me until our old age. The gods Bhaga, Aryama, Savita, Purandhi have entrusted your hand to me so that I may be able to keep the house-hold sacrificial fire (R. 10-85-36).

अनुव्रतः पितुः पुत्रो मात्रा भवतु संमनाः ।

जाया पत्ये मधुमतीं वाचं वदतु शन्तिवाम् ॥ २ ॥

It is very interesting to note how the newly-married couple was welcomed in the house. The couple is addressed:

'May you both reside here permanently; may you never be separated, may you be long-lived and enjoy your life in the company of your children and grand-children....'

मा भ्राता भ्रातरं द्विक्षन्मा स्वसारयुत स्वसा ।

सम्यञ्चः सव्रता भूत्वा वाचं वदत भद्रया ॥ ६ ॥

The bride was specially given a boon to choose. Lord Indra was requested to confer on her the blessing of ten children. But after that she was to cease to procreate and consider her husband as a son to be cared after. (R. 10-85-45).

सहृदयं सामनस्यमविद्वेषं कृणोमि वः ।

अग्न्यो अन्यमग्निं हर्यत बत्सं जातमिवाध्या ॥ १ ॥

Coming to the Atharva-Veda we discover very fine legends of happy married lives. There is a description of an ideal married life in the Third Kanda.

'The son should follow the father implicitly, and should be of the same mind as the mother; the wife should always be sweet and pleasant in her talks with her husband.'

'A brother should not despise his brother; so also a sister should not quarrel with a sister; all of them should be one with each other in mind and behaviour, as well as sweet in their talks;

'I will make you of one mind, full of affection and devoid of hatred for each other. May you accordingly endear yourself to each other.' (A. 3-30).

This should leave no doubt about the excellence of the whole conception of the institution of marriage in the Vedic times of which the present Hindu pattern is only a projection. Any one who wants to build some hypothesis on the systems of marriages only from the Vedic literature must be honest in not brushing aside such forceful evidence as cited above.

We have made a long digression in reviewing the thesis of Communist Dange. It may rightly be asked if it deserves so much consideration? Mr. Dange is not known to be a historian and much less a Vedic scholar. What is his authority in the field of Vedic scholarship? Indeed he does not deserve so much attention. If we have wasted space and arguments on him, it is not with any idea that Dange is any very respectable authority in Vedic research. But it cannot be denied that he is a leader of an organized political party whose prophets have always tried to be little and scoff at the traditional interpretations of history. Dange came forward to interpret the Vedic age on the lines and views of his great prophets Marx and Engels. It has now come to be realised that the Marxian interpretation of history is not by all means correct and unexceptionable. The ancient history of Bharat is a glaring instance to disprove the Marxian interpretation of history. Dange has perverted the ancient Vedic period to fit in the Communist dogma. To such of the readers of Dange's rubbish writing disguised by a high sounding title, who have no access nor ability to understand the Vedas, Mr. Dange might appear to be impressive and learned. Secondly in the study circles of the cells of these Communists, where young fanatics are being indoctrinated in the Marxian ideology, it is possible that Dange's thesis may acquire some respectability. The common man does not know what means Dange has adopted, what dishonest method he has followed, in how many places he has suppressed the truth or brushed it aside, and suggested totally unscientific and unhistorical interpretations. It is to counteract and repudiate his mischievous propagandist interpretation that much against our will and purpose we have had to make this diversion to show his interpretations and conclusions to be totally absurd and fantastic. We would have ignored such foolish insinuations had they come from

some other ignorant and innocuous man; but knowing that they are made by an aggressive iconoclast, who wants to smash at every concept of national religion, culture and civilisation, to poison every fount of national inspiration in order to make suitable ground for the implantation of a foreign ideology and anti-nationalism that we have had to refute Dange's hypothesis at such length.

Before we return to our subject, a thought that strikes us deserves to be noted here. The dramatic dialogue between Yama and Yami which Dange cites as a proof of his thesis points to exactly the interpretation which we have emphasised not only in literary way but actually in practice also. Assuming that Yami asked for the hand of her brother Yama, what was the end and the moral of the story? That can be gathered from Hindu practice surviving till this day which has immortalised this Yama and Yami not as husband and wife but as ideal brother and sister. There is an auspicious day in the 'festival of lights' which is marked for the memory of Yama and Yami, when every Hindu brother meets his sister in joy and greetings. That is the moral end of the one incident which had been happily terminated by the self-control of Yama to lead to the unshakable stability of the Hindu society. Imagine for instance the consequences of Yama's acceptance of the proposal of Yami, what a chaos that would have created in the unit of a family? Would ever anything like a family have developed at all? We shudder to think of the results that would have flown from the fall of Yama into Yami's embrace.

This review of the spirited idealism and the social ethics of life present the Vedic people as very cool and collected, enjoying the pleasures of life with a correct sense of limits and controls. The Vedic society was heroic, dignified in character with a will to conquer, proud of its moral code and metaphysical outlook devoted to the gods but never bending before any one else.

The Vedic outlook to life was a robust one. This whole universe was conceived to be alive with spirit by the Vedic man. He strove to derive as much joy out of the material universe as he could artistically do, without being affected or

trapped by it, always conscious and self-controlled, with his eyes fixed upon the ultimate target of rising above the mundane world and attaining Godhood. The Vedic man knew to a large extent the art of keeping a balance between enjoyment and renunciation of pleasures. This perfect poise could not be attained without a happy life at home in the family, and outside in the society. That the Vedic man seems to have accomplished this feat, must be due to a highly civilised system of education of the Vedic society in the homes and the schools. It will be proper now to turn to the system of education in the Vedic age which raised the society to the heights of one of the greatest civilisations of ancient times.

अस्मद्देशप्रसूतस्य सकाशादग्रजन्मनः ।

स्वं स्वं चरित्रं शिक्षेरन् पृथिव्यां सर्वमानवाः ॥

CHAPTER IX

EDUCATION IN THE VEDIC AGE

✓ CHARACTER was the most admired distinction of Bharatiya people. Our ancestors were so confident of the character of leaders of this nation, that they had called upon humanity to follow the precepts laid down here. ✓ Manu, the earliest and the greatest law-giver of mankind has proudly observed in this regard:

✓ 'Let all men on this earth learn the art and ways of life from the Brahmans born in this land.' We have in previous chapters illustrated the life and morals of the people, who made the Vedic nation. Someone may ask what is the evidence to prove that the actual conditions were as they are recorded in the Vedic writings. It is true that there is no evidence besides and beyond the Vedas in proof of what we have said. If we look to the innumerable observations made from time to time by foreign visitors and travellers in the periods following the Vedic age, they seem to be very much astonished at the high mark of character of the people here. These Bharatiya people who captured and captivated the eyes and hearts of the visiting foreign friends and foes, were all the staunch followers of the Vedas. It was the Vedas that had moulded and made their lives. It is, therefore, an irresistible conclusion that if the nation which has rung out unreserved appreciations from the historical travellers in the post-Vedic days was so startling in character and high in thoughts, it was due to not any accident but must have been so by virtue of a legacy of the Vedic people. It is enlightening to recount the encomiums showered by the foreign visitors. ✓ More than heroism, wealth, and learning Bharat valued the individual and national character higher.

सावित्रीमात्रसारोऽपि नरं विप्रः सुयन्त्रितः ।

नायन्त्रितस्त्रिवेदोऽपि सर्वाशी सर्वविक्रयी ॥

(Manusmriti 2-118)

Manu says: 'A Brahman of untarnished character, who knows only the 'Gayatri Mantra' is hundred times better than

a fallen pandit who is the master of all the Vedas.' 'Manu warns that knowledge alone of all the Vedic books will not help a man in attaining the highest bliss. It is only character and noble conduct that liberates a man. Let us recollect what the foreign visitors have said about the Hindu people.

Megasthenis, the Greek Ambassador in the court of the Emperor Chandragupta Maurya is reputed to be the first ancient visitor to Bharat whose observations are available though not directly. The time, when this Grecian lived in Bharat, was not so very happy in regard to the relations between the great Hindu Emperor Chandragupta, and the master of the Greek Councillor—Megasthenis. Between them there was an acute rivalry and struggle for domination. The Greeks had attacked the northern province of Bharat and Chandragupta had successfully repulsed the attackers and dislodged them from the territory forcibly occupied by them. It is on this background that Megasthenis visited and stayed with Chandragupta in Magadha the very heart of Bharat then. Writing about the Hindus he says:—

'Truth and virtue are the guiding principles of the Hindus. No Hindu has been punished for telling a lie. There is no touting in Hindusthan. When something is entrusted to someone there is no need in India to keep a witness or seal the trust, because there is implicit faith between the transactors. Generally these Hindu people do not lock their houses.'

The next foreign witness whose observations about the Hindu people are available is a Chinese traveller by name Yuan-Choang, who visited Bharat in the 7th century. He travelled widely in different provinces of Bharat and observed the good and bad points in contemporary life with a fine penetrating insight. It should be remembered that the Hindus observed by Choang belonged to his rival religion which had uprooted Buddhism and driven it out of Bharat. This Buddhist Chinese says:—

'The Hindus though fickle are indeed very high in character. They will never rob anyone. They will always give more than due to their opponents. They never cheat or deceive anyone. They always keep their word.'

Al-Id-Risi who visited India in the ninth century, observes:

'The Hindus are by nature just. Their behaviour is also according to this their inherent inclination. They are distinguished for nobility of purpose and honesty of action, that naturally attracts traders from everywhere to their country making it very prosperous.'

The Italian world traveller Marco Polo came to Bharat in 13th century. He writes, 'The honesty and morality of the Brahman traders can never be found in any other place. They will never utter a lie for any temptation.' When a foreign trader entrusts his goods for sale with them, they are sure to dispose it of at the highest possible profit and pay the trader fully without themselves demanding their commission. They will be satisfied with what the trader willingly gives them.'

The next famous visitor was Ibna Batuta, in the 14th century. His longer descriptions are all high comments of the Bharatiya people.

How was such a high mark of character accomplished by this nation? Centuries of culture and education alone could raise the nation to the noble height which became the subject of admiration from all quarters. To know how this education and culture was imbibed in the society, we have to examine the system of education in the Vedic days.

The one exclusive feature of the Bharatiya system of education was the institute of 'Ashrama', the hermitage. These 'Ashramas' which were not schools in modern sense—were the centres where noble idealism of plain living and high thinking was inculcated in the pupils from the very early boyhood by the Guru.

The one fundamental concept which is the basis of the planning of life of an individual in the Bharatiya society has to be understood well. The Bharatiya not only in the Vedic age but also after it, right up to now, considers life as a continued sacrifice. Being a believer in such a notion about life in the terms of a sacrifice from birth to death, he looks at it as a means to achieve something by complete dedication of the whole life on this earth. This ideology introduced a plan for every individual to follow during his sojourn in this world. Assuming, human life to be hundred years long, the first portion of it was reserved for the acquisition of knowledge and

virtues necessary for the successful steering of the individual right up to the end of the destined journey. *four stages* During this period of boyhood and youth the child stayed in some Ashrama under the care of a master, practised celibacy, acquired self-control and gathered knowledge from the mouth of his Guru. This was called the course of Brahmacharya. *stages*

After the course of Brahmacharya, followed the stage of life in which the individual was required to go through the duties and functions of a house-holder called 'Grihastashrama'. The third stage or Ashrama was called the 'Vanaprastha', in which the individual retired from the household obligations to a secluded life and equipped himself with the physical and mental qualifications to accomplish the end and object, the consummation of life. And the last was complete liberation from all bonds in the experience of the *summum bonum* of life, the full and perfect bliss, the realisation of the unity of the soul with the Universal oneness. Of all these four stages of life which are in themselves all important, the first Brahmacharya is verily the most significant in that in it the individual has to lay down the foundation for the structure of his life. It was in this stage that the great principles which were to last them for the life-time were ingrained in the minds of the disciples. What was the system of education in the Vedic and post-Vedic days, which prepared the children of this nation that came to be admired by one and all that visited this country right up to the end of the fourteenth century? No nation can rise if its children are not properly trained and educated in time. It is the character that has to be built first as the indispensable foundation for the sound building of a nation. How did Bharat accomplish this great task so as to produce a galaxy of luminous stars in every generation right from the Vedic times up to the recent historical period? Let us look into this bright chapter of our civilisation the system of Vedic education.

In the order of the society in and after the Vedic age, the first stage of life, namely the Brahmacharya with which started the course of education of a child began with the 'Upanayan' ceremony. 'Upanayan' meaning 'taking a child to the preceptor' was in fact the initiation of a child to a course of

education under the care and guidance of the family preceptor. Unlike other societies, Hindus gave this initiation a form of Dharmic sacrament or rite. Looking upon life as one great sacrifice from cradle to the grave, the Hindus consider every stage of life as a part and operation in the completion of the whole sacrifice. Initiation came to be recognised as a major one of the sixteen 'Samskaras', the necessary religious rites. In other societies religion confines itself within spheres of life which are other-worldly. Education in those non-Hindu societies has therefore become merely a course of know-how to live. But the Hindus look upon the 'Upanayan' as an initiation in the course of knowledge which teaches the 'initiated' not only how to live in this world, but more particularly how to be free from it for ever, from the cycle of births and deaths too. ✓The disciple gathers in the hermitage of the Guru the requisite knowledge of sciences and arts as well as the secrets of life here and hereafter.

For the rite of initiation the child was taken by parents to the Guru. There the child was directed by the Guru to place a stick in the sacrificial fire and to take a vow of celibacy and all what Brahmacharya meant. It will be noted that purity of character and behaviour were the most important demands on the initiated. Not all could be initiated. Only those who were of good conduct and who were expected to adhere to the rules of Brahmacharya were initiated. The Apastamba Sutras and the Nirukta have mentioned some rules as to who should be initiated. This of 'course means that education was not universal but only selective. Education had to be religious. Only those who could observe these very strict rules of Brahmacharya, the Guru was pleased to keep them in his Ashram and reveal to them the oceans of knowledge. The Vedas refer to the Brahmachari as one like the gods, for they say, he is always pre-occupied in prayers and penance. ✓That a Brahmachari is regarded by the Vedic sages as if on the plane of gods, is a proof of what great significance they attached to the course of Brahmacharya in the social life. In their opinion that was the period in which the individual could completely liquidate the inherent traits of animality and equip himself

with the virtues and strength to rise to Godhood. From that angle they looked to this course of Brahmacharya.

There is a very eloquent description of Brahmacharya in the Atharva-Veda. The basic conception and form of this very important system of education and practical initiation in the sciences and arts of life which the later Grihya Sutras developed into regular prescriptions were indeed formulated in the Vedic times. Atharva-Veda narrates:—

ब्रह्मचारिणं चरति रोदसी उभे तस्मिन् देवाः संमनसो भवन्ति ।

स दाधार पृथिवीं दिवं च स आचार्यं तपसा पिपति ॥ १ ॥

‘The Brahmachari who is engrossed in the practice of penance, touches the heaven and earth at the same time. Indra and all other gods are ever ready and willing to bless him. He supports both the heaven and the earth with his penance and brings honour to his Guru.’ (Literally the latter part means that one who practises Brahmacharya never behaves in a manner which will bring dishonour to his Guru).

‘The Pitris, the different group deities, great gods like Indra and others, and the remaining 33 gods, Gandharvas, all the angels and elements which roam about in the spheres protect the Brahmachari with all their might. It is the Brahmacharya that supports and preserves the life in the universe in the form of gods, human beings.’

ब्रह्मचारिणं पितरो देवजनाः पृथग् देवा अनुसंयन्ति सर्वे ।

गन्धर्वा एनमन्वायन् त्रयस्त्रिंशत् त्रिशता षट्सहस्राः सर्वान्स देवांस्तपसा पिपति ॥

The preceptor who initiates a disciple in the course of Brahmacharya, keeps the disciple for three days in the womb of learning and on the fourth he brings him out when the gods hover around to see the twice-born Brahmachari.

आचार्य उपनयमानो ब्रह्मचारिणं कृणुते गर्भमन्तः ।

तं रात्रीस्तिस्र उदरे बिभर्ति तं जातं द्रष्टुमभिसंयन्ति देवाः ॥ ३ ॥

(Atharva-Veda 11, Sukta 1-2-3)

The first three Varnas were eligible for the ceremony of Upanayan and were recognised as twice-born. The first is the natural birth from natural parents, but the second is from the Guru who initiates the disciple into the course of Brahma-

charya. This is an old conception which is found in all the Dharma-Sutras. The Apastamb Sutras say:

“स हि विधातः तं जनयति ता श्रेष्ठं जन्मशरीरमेव माता पितरौ जनयतः ।”

‘The parents give birth to the physical body, but it is in the Upanayan that the preceptor blesses the disciple with a second and better birth with the learning and knowledge.’ (Apastamb Dharma Sutra 1-1-15-17). This concept had been already crystallised in the Vedic times as will be clear from the identical thought expressed in the Atharva-Veda. There is no doubt that the initiation in the Brahmacharya which commences with the offering of the Samidha (sacrificial sticks) in the sacrificial fire and wearing the girdle made of the Maunja grass round the waist had been adopted as a regular prescribed practice right from the Vedic days as specifically mentioned in the Atharva-Veda. Though it is a fact that the Vedas desire the initiation only of the competent and virtuous candidate in the course of studies, it is also true that the Upanayan was considered as an indispensable physical ceremony for every one in the first three Varnas. If only few were found to be fit to be admitted to the strenuous course of education, all were enjoined to go through the Upanayan with the thought that the ‘Samskar’ (operation), will surely have its purifying and ennobling effect upon even the less qualified and competent disciples. The stay in the Ashram and an introduction in the code of good conduct was bound to have a salutary result in keeping the initiated on the right path of virtue all throughout his future life. The individual that had not gone through this ceremony of Upanayan was considered to be a ‘Vratya’ (an outcaste), a fallen person unfit for social association including marriage partnership. These prescriptions and prohibitions came to be formulated when the Upanayan became a *sine-qua-non* for a member of the first three Varnas to enter into any social contract. This conservation was considered necessary prior to the admission of an individual into the social structure. That automatically became an aid and assurance of the protection and preservation of the Vedic culture, civilisation and know-

ledge by the whole society as such in which every member was initiated and pledged to the faith in the Vedas.

✓ The Upanayan ceremony was prescribed to be performed in the fifth, seventh or the ninth year according to the order of castes. The boy of a Vedic Brahman was taken to the Ashram in the fifth year. The Upanayan in the other two Varnas was performed at a little later age of the boys. The reason was after the Upanayan ceremony the unavoidable obligation which marked the daily routine of an initiated Brahmachari was the performance of the daily sacrifice and the chanting of the Gayatri Mantra. Reasons apart, it was and is a patent fact that a child in the Brahmin's home is more adept in the catching of pronunciations of the Sanskrit mantras. That qualified him to be initiated earlier. The second reason, which may not be generally known is that the Vedic Mantra of Savitri with which the Upanayan begins is in the Gayatri meter of eight syllables for Brahmins; in the case of the second Varna the Kshatriyas, the Mantra is in the Trishthub meter of eleven syllables; and in the case of the Vaishyas it is of Jagathi meter of twelve syllables. It may be that for the facility of pronunciation and memorising, different ages are prescribed for different orders. But the age bar was fixed that every child must be initiated before the sixteenth year. The Jaimini Sutras enjoin that the Upanayan has to be performed before the sixteenth year, for it is useless to do so after that age as the boy at that age is more likely to become conscious of his sex and hence less capable of being naturally initiated into the prescriptions of self-control and more prone to be tempted by passions. Later on as the functions of the three orders became more distinguished and determined and Kshatriyas and Vaishyas were required to perform other functions and duties than the acquisition of knowledge, which became the chief occupation of the first order, the prescriptions about the performance of their Upanayan were relaxed in regard to age limits. The Kshatriyas and Vaishyas were permitted to go through the Upanayan from the ages between twenty to thirty-three and twenty-four to thirty-six respectively merely by way of formal initiation for their admission into the social order by way of marriage.

It will be not merely interesting but very much informative to understand the sense and spirit behind so many forms and functions in the Upanayan ceremony. Before the child is taken to the sacrificial fire there is a 'Matri-Bhojan'—literally meaning dining with the mother. This is the last joint meal of the child in the same dish with the mother. The child has now grown up, and is going to be away from home for a number of years; and when he returns he will be so big, as not to take the liberty of dining from the dish of the mother. Till the Upanayan the child was a child and beyond all rules. But now it was going to be initiated and was being bound by rules and regulations. The child was given a purificatory bath by the mother and was told that it cannot thereafter take its meals without a prior bath. That was the sense behind the bath and the mother's dinner. Never again would the child break the rule of bath before the meals. Never again would it indulge in partaking food from common dishes, not even of the mother, which spoils the purity of behaviour and adversely affects the thoughts of man. The Brahmachari was forbidden to follow a life of a libertine thereafter. After that the child was shaved, a fresh bath followed, and then a girdle of Kush grass was tied round its waist, in which was slung a piece of cloth called 'Kaupinam'. The girdle was required to be woven with three twines of grass connoting that the child was bound to study three Vedas. When all these functions are performed, Vedic Mantras were recited. The hymn 'The daughter of Shradha...' "श्रद्धाया दुहिता ।" is required to be chanted on this occasion. The girdle is at once a protection from all impurities of life. It prepares the Brahmachari to get ready to acquire greater mental power and physical strength. The three Samidhas which are then offered in the sacrificial fire have a significant purpose. The Atharva-Veda tells us: 'These three Samidhas have the following indication. By the first 'Samidha' is pointed out the earth, and the second indicates the sky. Offering of the two in the fire becomes a potent force for their protection. It is by the wearing of the 'Mekhala' (the girdle) and the penance that follows, the Brahmachari becomes capable of preserving and protecting everything.' (Atharva-Veda 11-1-4).

The next hymn tells us: 'From all these, it becomes clear that the Parabrahma is the prime cause of the universe; from this Parabrahma was born the brilliant Brahmachari in white clothes dedicated to penance in order. From him came the Brahma, which in turn manifested the universe composed of devas, and others. Therefore the Brahmachari is superior to all.' (Atharva-Veda 11-1-5).

The daily sacrifice enjoined on the Brahmachari with initiation had to be performed by him without any interruption. ✓ The Brahmachari had to take up a deer's hide as his wearing apparel. ✓ He did not shave his head. The Brahmachari had to offer the 'Samidhas' in the fire every day, that was in fact his most important daily duty. The carrying of the Samidhas to the Guru is itself an expression of readiness to undergo his discipleship.

✓ The Gopath Brahman tells us that the deer-skin which is so soft, shining and attractive is the sign of power of Brahma, and inspires the Brahmachari to strive for the acquisition of that purity and power. In course of time as the society developed and made progress from hides and barks to cotton cloth, the deer-skin was replaced by a cotton piece. But the original significance of the deer's hide could not be forgotten; and though the apparel was changed, a piece of deer-hide remained as a reminder in the cotton thread, called 'Yajnopavita'. That is why even now the Brahmachari's sacred thread preserves the sign of the hide in the form of a small piece slung into it. Thus the girdle of the Kush grass, the Kaupin and the thread with a piece of deer-hide in it, have survived even in our present formal 'Upanayan' of the Brahmachari. Dressed and decorated thus the Brahmachari who offers his Samidhas in the sacrificial fire everyday, prays for the lustre of the Fire and the power of the Brahma.

The Atharva-Veda describes:

'The Brahmachari who offers his Samidhas in the fire every morning and evening shines with the resplendent lustre of fire. The seeker of knowledge and Brahma adorned with the unshaved locks of hair on his head and wearing the deer's hide, fills the gaps and spaces between the seas with his prowess and penance. He supports the rivers like the Ganga and

the Brahma itself. The Supreme Brahma created this universe with the prowess of this Brahmacharya, and it is with that the Indra could overpower the demons.'

The gods also bless the Brahmachari who is trained and taught to abide by all the codes of good conduct of Brahmacharya by his preceptor. ✓ The Brahmachari who maintains himself by begging food wins over the heaven and the earth with the two sticks offered in the names of the twin deities; it is he who maintains them. ✓ The treasure of the Vedas lies well protected and concealed in the heart of the Guru; and the second treasure of divine power and potency has also been well held in the above place. ✓ Both are protected and maintained by the Brahmachari by his intense penance and study. It is with great diligence and search, that he realises the secret knowledge concealed in them. There is a fire concealed underneath this earth; as there is another known and revealed to us on the surface. With the rising of the Sun, he actually brings about a union between both the fires; and thus establishes their stability by his penance. It is the prowess of the Brahmachari that the god Varuna, showers his life-giving water on this earth. That shower of rain at the proper time produces corn and grains which sustain life on earth.

✓ It is the Guru, the Acharya, who is the life-giver, the delighter, and also the death of a disciple when he commits wrong. ✓ All the blessings and the bliss are the gifts of the Acharya.

'The god Varuna sustained the earth by becoming the preceptor in the form of waters; he surrendered everything that belonged to him to his master the great Prajapati. He never gave a thought to his own body or happiness when he practised the Brahmacharya. (This suggests that every Brahmachari must similarly offer everything that he acquires by his penance at the feet of his master).

'In the Acharya all the gods and the deities are symbolised who can comprehend his greatness?

'The King also becomes capable of protecting and sustaining his subjects only on the strength of the Brahmacharya. (This again implies that the land in which meritorious Brahmacharis

reside the king is able to protect his subjects). The preceptor also reveals the secrets of knowledge only to a Brahmachari who observes the pure code of Brahmacharya. It is on account of the Brahmacharya that a girl can get a good husband; why even the cattle like the bullocks, horses, etc., can live long and strong on the efficacy of the Brahmacharya.

'It is sheerly by the force of Brahmacharya that the gods became immortal and Indra became their chief.

'Who does not know that the plant life, the cycle of day and night, the wheel of the stars and seasons only moves on account of the penance of the Brahmachari?

'Is it not that all this universe of animate and inanimate life in it is the product of the Brahmacharya of the Prajapati?

'The Brahmachari receives the knowledge of the Vedas and the secrets of life from the mouth of the Acharya, preserves all that he acquires and thus helps to continue the course of life of this grand universe.

'Let it not be forgotten that the whole universe is the product of the Vedas and the gods and deities with all their unlimited powers are the result of the knowledge of the Vedas.

'Because the Brahmachari holds the secrets of the Vedas in him, therefore he becomes the receptacle of the support of the Godhood, the organs, and the whole universe....

'He is also the master of the organs of senses, the reservoir of all food and the essence of creation....

'Therefore O Brahma, you who manifest yourself in the form of Brahmacharya, give us the mastery of senses as well as the wealth of their objects; bestow on us progeny and the food in plenty. Thus shines the Brahmachari who is always pure and sacred with his daily baths.'

Taking into careful consideration this significance of the course of Brahmacharya in the Vedic life as described by the Atharva-Veda one can gather how highly the Vedic people esteemed that preparatory course of education and studies. They gave it an indispensable character converting it into a major sacred 'Sanskara' rite without which no individual was allowed to enter into the social contract in life. They sanctified the system and planned every small form and precedent in the ceremony, with a careful thought and vision to shape the child in such a

way as to turn him into a pillar of strength to the society in which he was to live. The Vedic people from the very beginning had regarded the Brahmacharya as a vow which everyone had to take and practise. The Shatapath Brahman observes:

“यथा इ वा अग्निः समिद्धो रोचते एवं हवै स ज्ञात्वा रोचते ब्रह्मचर्यं चरति ।”

‘Fire shines when enkindled by wood-sticks; the Brahmachari who accepts the Brahmacharya, performs his functions, and becomes purified by the observance of the vow, shines like the glowing fire with the lustre of his learning and penance.’

Now let us turn to some other minor prescriptions which the child disciple had to undergo during the ceremony of Upanayan as they point out unmistakably the idea and ideals of the system of education in the Ashramas and the ways and methods adopted then for the full attainment of those objects and expectations.

Next to the Sun the glowing fire is the only visual object which gives us an idea of burning lustre. The lustre of the fire was therefore kept as the ideal of prowess which an individual could wish for. In asking the Brahmachari to put the sticks in the fire it was the intention to tell him to kindle the fire and to become one like him, by enlightening one-self by rousing the potent powers of the soul. When the sticks were offered, a prayer had to be actually recited invoking the powers that be to confer on the student the prowess and the lustre of fire. Let us turn to that meaningful prayer.

“अग्नये समिधमाहार्षं बृहते जातवेदसे । यथा त्वमग्ने समिधा समिध्यसे एवमहमायुषा मेधया वर्चसा पशुभिर्ब्रह्मवर्चसेन समिन्वे जीवपुत्रो ममाचार्यो मेधाव्यहमसन्त्यनिराकुरिष्णुर्यशस्वी तेजस्वी ब्रह्मवर्चस्यन्नादो भूयासम्ऽस्वाहा ।”

The disciple with the ‘Samidhas’ in his hands stands before the fire and says: ‘O Agni, I have brought these sticks for you. O Agni, you burn brilliantly with the sticks; let me also with your blessing become long-lived, intelligent, shining, talented, and enlightened. May the children of my Guru live long; may I be blessed with knowledge; I will preserve the knowledge revealed to me by my preceptor in the depth of my heart; I will become successful in life; I wish to become influential in

the world; I shall shine with the brilliance of learning; and I shall enjoy my food; here are the sticks to you.'

It is needless to tell the modern educationists how the prayer recited every day by the boy offering the sticks in the fire must be exerting its influence and creating an impression upon his heart which was bound to be stirred with sentiments and roused by noble ambitions.

Imagine for a moment the sight of an impressionable boy of eight years beyond all vicious surroundings standing by the side and under the gaze of his illustrious preceptor offering his 'Samidhas' in the burning fire and prayers to the rising and setting Sun every morning and evening, punctual to minute. The Brahmachari was bound to turn out as illustrious as his preceptor, the burning fire and the lustrous Sun. This was the expected result of the atmosphere of the Ashram. If we contrast the present times with those of old Vedic days, the difference will be at once obvious. The reasons and causes of the present growing licentious and unbridled tendencies in the student world can be traced to the disappearance of faith and absence of idealism which have to be inculcated in the impressionable minds of the students right from their tender ages. Our ancient social planners had given a serious thought to the problem of the evolution of the individual side by side his endeavour to acquire knowledge and education. This will be apparent from the description given above of the 'Upanayan' and the prayers of the Brahmachari. Such was the system of the Vedic education which started at an early age. It was ineffaceably impressed upon the mind of the disciple that he must acquire knowledge as well as character and spiritual powers for the benefit of the self as much as of the community, society and the nation. For the accomplishment of this end, idea was implanted by the Guru in his ward's mind that the disciple had been transferred to the care of the deities the Sun, Bhaga, Yama, Aryama, etc., to whom he must remain devoted and dedicated so that they may protect him all the while and help him to attain his mission. There is a very interesting dialogue bearing on this aspect between a teacher and his disciple in the 'Smritichandrika'.

The Guru asks the Brahmachari: 'To whom do you belong. O Brahmachari?'

The disciple: 'I belong to you, of course.'

But the answer was wrong. The Guru would then explain to the disciple, that he was not the Brahmachari of the preceptor but of Indra, the mightiest among the gods, and of Agni, the most shining of the deities. 'I am only their representative, and I give the lessons on their behalf and under their command.' This created an unshakable belief in the boy that the mission on which he had embarked had been ordained by the gods and the mighty elements which promoted him to be earnest and unflinching in his endeavours until the object was accomplished.

The concept of education and gathering of knowledge according to the Hindus is that it must be imparted by the Guru personally. Without a Guru no one can really learn the secrets of knowledge. Guru being the sole guide and key to secrets of knowledge, it followed that there must be a harmonised affinity between the teacher and the taught. There is a ritual in the Upanayan ceremony to establish this very necessary identification or linking of the two hearts. The ceremony is called 'the touching of the hearts'. The Guru touches with his palm the heart of his disciple and chants a mantra to mean 'let there be an eternal affection and faith between us'. That almost links the hearts of the teacher and the taught.

After the 'touching of the heart' ceremony follows the 'Ashmarohan' ceremony. The Guru asks the disciple to look at a stone and then to stand on it. He tells his ward that the stone does not move and stands steady; like the stone, the disciple must also make his mind determined and firm. Though small and trifling, a ceremony like this made the scholar as strong and steady as a rock, never falling a victim to temptations, force or other circumstances. With these ceremonies the Upanayan becomes complete. The child is now ready to be initiated into the first lessons of the Vedic studies with the 'Savitri-mantra', which is commonly called 'Gayatri' mantra.

“तत्सवितुर्वरेण्यं भर्गो देवस्य धीमहि धियो यो नः प्रचोदयात् ।”

The Sun and the Agni are the two supreme of the symbolic

deities in the Vedic pantheon. The people of the first three orders are enjoined to worship chiefly these three symbols of godly power. The Sun is worshipped by chanting the Savitri-mantra. This mantra: 'We meditate upon that most desirable 'Tej' (brilliance and prowess) of the god Savita (who animates this universe). May He stir our talents.' (Rig. 3-62-10) is dedicated to the Sun, the visible symbol of fire in the skies. Because it is in the Gayatri meter, it came to be popularly known as the Gayatri mantra. It is a scientific fact that of all the things that sustain life on earth, the Sun is the most efficacious and primary cause. It is the Sun round whom our earth resolves day and night; it is the Sun that causes the seasons; it is the heat of the Sun which brings rains, which in their turn cause the growth of the vegetable kingdom and provide food for the living. But for the Sun there would be all darkness, there would be no season, no heat, no rains. In short, life would become extinct. The Vedic Brahman therefore prayed the god Sun the cause of all causes of life on earth every day in the above prayers.

The prayer mantras for the Kshatriyas and Vaishyas though from the Vedic Texts are different from those prescribed for the Brahmans. The Savitri-mantra of the Kshatriyas is in the Trishthub meter, and that of the Vaishyas is in the Jagati. According to Medhatithi, the learned commentator on the Manu-Smriti, the Savitri-mantra of the Kshatriyas is:

आ कृष्णेन रजसा वर्तमानो विवेशयन् अमृतं मर्त्यं च ।

हिरण्ययेन सविता रथेना देवो याति भुवनानि पश्यन् ॥

'Here comes the Sun, riding his golden chariot, travelling through the dark spheres and inspiring the mortal and immortal, animate and inanimate in the world to their routine life, and casting his glances on all the worlds.' (R. 1-35-2). There seems to be some difference of opinion, however, as Narayan, the commentator on the Samkhya of Grihya-Sutras suggests that the mantra is 'The God is Savita, with his golden rays, traverses through the Heaven and the Earth; He dispels all diseases; he assumes the form of the Sun, and travelling through the dark skies penetrates to the heavens.' (R. 1-35-9).

हिरण्यपाणिः सविता विचर्षणिः उमे द्यावापृथिवी अन्तरीयते ।

अपामीवां बाधते वे ति सूर्य अभि कृष्णेन रजसा द्यां ऋणोति ॥

There is a slight difference of opinion even regarding the Savitri-mantra of the Vaishyas. According to Medhatithi, Shyatatap, and Laugakshi, the mantra is:

विश्वारूपाणि प्रति मुंचते कविः प्र असावीत् भद्रं द्विऽपदे चतुऽपदे ।

वि नार्कं अख्यत् सविता वरेण्यः अनु प्रऽद्यानं उषसः वि राजति ॥

'It is the omniscient Savita that shapes the forms of all things that exist in the universe; what things are for the good of birds, beasts and men have been all created by him; the supreme God threw his glance in the middle of the skies, and in the wake of the dawn he became bright and shining.' (R. 6-81-2). The Ashavalayan Grihya-Sutras and the Varah Grihya Sutras, instead of the above mantra suggest that the hymn R. 5-81-1... is the mantra for the Vaishyas. That mantra is as follows:

युजते मनः उत युजते धियः विप्राः विप्रस्य बृहत् विपऽचितः ।

विहोत्राः दधे वयुनऽवित् एकः इत् मही देवस्य सवितुः परिऽस्तुतिः ॥

'The wise devotees of that god Savita who is the inspirer of life in the world dedicate their minds and attentions in his service. He alone knows what is good conduct, it is he who lays down the rules for the performance of sacrifices; indeed the highest merit lies in the praise of that god.'

The Savita hymn for the Vaishyas according to the above-mentioned Narayan is:

“हंसः शुचिऽसत् वसुः अन्तरिक्षऽसत् होता वेदिऽसत् अतिथिः दुरोणऽसत् ।
नृऽसत् वरऽसत् ऋतऽसत् व्योमऽसत् अप्ऽजाः गोऽजाः ऋतऽजाः अद्रिऽजाः
ऋतम् बृहत् ।”

'This god Sun is the Swan amongst the blotless lustres; he is the great treasure appearing on the atmosphere: he is the Agni on the altar, the high-priest in a sacrifice; he is as if the guest in the house of a good householder. The Sun moves amidst the brave; shines in the highest heights; he permeates all good things and yet mounts high over in the skies; he also appears in the sacred waters; becomes visible in the form of light; he shows himself in good behaviour; thus is the Sun—Dharma incarnate.'.....

With the initiation the disciple was given the *Brahma-Danda*, a stick, his inseparable companion during the course of *Brahmacharya*. The preceptor as if conveyed to his disciple the idea that he had embarked upon a long journey in quest of knowledge and strength. With the stick in hand the *Brahmachari* had to go about for the begging of his daily food. There is of course no doubt that this formal search for food, knowledge, and strength were merely symbolical for the first day of the *Upanayan* ceremony—in as much as the alms had to be begged from the nearest relative like the mother and father. The *Upanayan* ceremony came to conclusion on the third day after the performance of the ritual called '*Medhajanan*'—literally meaning 'enkindling the intellect.'

This detailed consideration of the various functions and rituals in the *Upanayan* ceremony will convince the reader how carefully and for what calculated results these small details had been incorporated in the ceremony. This was meant to be an initiation into an eventful and enrapping life of self-reliance, self-confidence and controlled thought and action. The quest of knowledge, and the struggle for the acquisition of strength, are not easy objectives. The disciple was invigorated with a spirit of confidence that he will succeed with self-determination and tireless perseverance. The rituals created in him a faith that the supernatural powers were at his back to bless his endeavour with success; they instilled in him an ambition to become as prowessful as *Indra*, as lustrous as the Sun, whom he offered his prayers morning and evening, and as shining as the Fire whom he worshipped; there was nothing impossible to achieve for such a disciple, who imbibed a conviction and confidence that he was prowessful enough to face even death who could dare not touch him. That was the function and the object of these rituals.

The contemporary literature also harped on the same ideas.

“ब्रह्म इ वै प्रजा मृत्यवे संप्रायच्छत् ब्रह्मचारिणमेव न संप्रददौ, स होवाचास्यामस्मिन्निति, किमिति, यां रात्रिं समिधमनाहृत्य वसेत्, तां आयुषः अबहन्वी-
येति, तस्मात् ब्रह्मचारी अहरहः समिधामाहृत्य सायंप्रातः अग्निं परिचरेत् ।”

While detailing why a *Brahmachari* must perform his daily sacrifice, the *Gopath Brahman* tries to impress that the

'Almighty gave over the mortal beings to the charge of Death; he only saved the Brahmachari by saying to Death that a Brahmachari will be in his hands on the night he does not offer oblations to the Agni.' The injunction means that the Brahmachari will avoid his daily duties only on pain of death. Who can deny the efficacy of these injunctions and prescriptions which helped to infuse in the young impressionable minds of the disciples a devotion for the worship of the most glorious of the symbols of power, and an indomitable ambition to subdue and conquer Death?

After the Upanayan followed a series of other vows and observations which became necessary for the teaching of particular lores and sciences. It was an accepted and invariable rule of the Vedic system of education that no one who was unworthy to be initiated or taught a particular branch of knowledge, was ever admitted to it. It was because of this strict convention that only the deserving disciples were imparted the lessons in higher sciences, which resulted in the unfailing success of the teacher and the taught. It was because of this that the life of the disciples was moulded harmoniously without any accidents or desertions for the full growth and realisation of the objects.

Let us now look to the remaining 'Sanskaras' before we turn to the method and studies in the hermit-schools. After the Upanayan ceremony comes the ritual of the 'Upakarma', otherwise known as the 'Shravani'. In those days this ritual did not mean what it came to be understood in later periods namely the changing of the 'sacred thread' after a sip of the cow-dung and cow-urine. 'Upakarma' does not mean the change of sacred thread though that is no doubt an important item in it. In almost all the 'Vedic sanskaras' the initiated has to throw off his worn-out thread, his deer-garment and the stick and replace them by new ones. In the 'Upakarma' also the year-old thread has to be changed but it is not for this exclusive purpose that the 'Samskarma' has been enjoined. This is in fact a very significant annual programme which has to be undergone by the teacher and the taught alike. The 'Shravani' or the 'Upakarma' is a regular annual ritual to be performed by all the inmates of the 'ashram' once in a year at

the start of the session. With the performance of 'Shravani', the disciples and the teachers had to revise their recitation of the whole Vedic texts. That was the object of the 'Upakarma' which was the start of the session of the revision of the Vedic learning in the ashramas. Thus though it was purely a ritual to be followed by the teachers and the taught, it came to be enjoined on all the householders later on. The Vedic preceptors felt it necessary to enjoin the performance of the 'Shravani' and the revision of the Vedas on all the followers of the Vedic prescriptions to whichever stage of life they belonged except the last, namely, the 'Sanyasis'.

Why was such a course of annual revision necessary, one may ask? The reason is not far or difficult to find.

Though the human tendencies have been the same almost all through the ages, clear distinction between the natures of the two studies, namely of the Vedic and the modern sciences, will be remembered. The modern scholar, once he has mastered the main principles of a science or a study, can safely carry the day; but the Vedic scholar has a different problem. It is not merely the knowledge that matters but the correct mastery over every syllable, every accent, and pause that make the Vedic scholarship meaningful. Slightest mistake even in the matter of accents is considered to be a grave and unpardonable lapse inviting punishment. It became inevitable for everyone who aspired to be recognised as a Vedic scholar to be correct in the recitation of the texts. That necessitated the verbatim revision of the texts, and the Shravani was one such occasion laid down for the specific purpose. It was for this reason that every householder has also been enjoined to recite the Vedic mantras every day. That the Vedas once committed to memory should not be forgotten a provision had to be made in the rituals, and the 'Shravani' came in handy. In Bharat the season being of rains, there is a sort of greater leisure and convenience to sit in the house for a number of days. The incantation of the Vedas started with the Upakarma ceremony and continued for at least two months. In fact the Sage Shwetaketu insisted that all married men should also go to their preceptors' ashramas for two months and stay there for the revision of the Vedas. The Sage Apastamba, who has been considered to be

the most rational and progressive of the Vedic sages opposed this view of Shwetaketu on the ground that the householders may not find it convenient to stay for two months at a stretch in the ashrama far away from their homes. It was as a compromise between the two views that an understanding was arrived at that the performance of the Upakarman should be mandatory though there should be no compulsion to go to the preceptor's ashram for the period of two months. Thus it became almost an enjoined duty of the Brahmanas to revise the Vedas with the concentrated attention they deserve and refresh one's personal knowledge once in a year. The programme lasted for almost four months of the year after the Upakarman ceremony. Thus what was once meant for only the Brahmachari scholar and the preceptor in the ashram came to be the practice of the whole Brahman class.

This Upakarman ceremony came to be called 'Shravanī' in later days. It was only on account of the season of the year in which it commenced. In a primarily agricultural country like Bharat, the months after the rains had started and the sowing operations had been over, are the months of general leisure. It was therefore considered more convenient to have this long session of a refreshing course in the leisure months beginning from Shravan. The study of the Vedas is very much connected with the study of heavenly bodies also. The greatest deity of the Vedic people whom they invoke every morning and evening to bestow on them his light, prowess and intellect is the Sun, the brightest among the luminaries in the sky. The Gayatri mantra which is the mantra par excellence of the Vedic scholars is in devotion to the Sun. It is in the month of Shravan that the constellation Hasta which has the Sun as its deity arises. This must then be the reason why the Upakarman was recommended to be performed on the fifth day of Shravan when the constellation of Hasta is in conjunction with the Sun. There is also another alternative opinion which commends that the Upakarman should be performed on the fifteenth day of Shravan, that is the day when the Shravan constellation rises. It may be this reason why the ceremony was called 'Shravanī'.

Vedas was the main subject for studies in the Vedic times. The Brahmachari while he performed the worship of the fire invoked the different deities to confer on him sharp intellect. Those ancient Rishis who had realised and revealed the Vedamantras for the welfare of mankind were also remembered with great reverence. Because of the diversity of sects in the Vedic Brahman tribes, there were different seers and deities and the Upakarma also differed from section to section.

In the Upakarma ceremony of the school which followed the Rig-Veda, the deities were Savita, Shradha, Medha, Prajna, to whom oblations were offered and then the hymns from the first Mandal to the tenth were recited.

The Brahmans who followed the Yajur-Veda offered the oblations to the sacrificing priests and the deities first, and then they remembered the sages of the various 'kandas' (chapters) of the Yajur-Veda. After that they make their offerings to the four Vedas and Itihas as the fifth Veda. After this was done, they bring to mind the great commentators who have elaborated and explained the Vedic texts on the 'institute of sacrifice' like Krishna-Dwaipayana, Vaishampayan, Tittiri, Atreya, Kaundinya, Bodhayan, Apastamb, Satyashadh Yajnyavalkya, Bhardwaja, Agniveshya and such others.

The Sama-Vedis first make the offerings to Jaimini, Talavakar, Ranayani, Bhaguri who are the renowned authors of the Sama-Veda texts, and then they commence it with the prayer that both the disciple and the teacher should be able to finish successfully the study of the Vedas.

The chief object then of the Upakarma is the refreshing of the knowledge of the Vedas. The grateful remembrance of the ancient seers and scholars who enlarged the regions of knowledge, which was incidentally achieved by this rite of Upakarma is really a noble idea not to be lost sight of. The thought is so valuable that if practised even today, it will pave the way for greater good of the scholar and the society. The remembrance of the bygone benefactors will surely not fail to rouse the sense of duty towards our religion and society even in this too materialistic an age.

The ceremony which follows the Upakarma is the 'Utsarjan'. It is the concluding ceremony of what was commenced with

the Upakarma. It almost follows the pattern of the Upakarma in the prayers and offerings to the sages and the deities. The ceremony in former days fell after two months on the completion of the revision and refreshing course of the Vedic texts. But later on as this aspect of the Upakarma ceremony was also lost in as much as the symbolic refreshing of the Vedic texts was done in a day in a single session, the 'Utsarjan' also came to be performed immediately after the Upakarma.

The last and the most important of the rituals which a Brahmachari had to undergo in his career is the 'Samavartan'. The ceremony was a send-off to the disciple after he had acquired the lores and learnings and was ready to return to his home. It is an irony of fate and a ludicrous turn of the situation that so important a ritual should now be transformed into a formal function preceding the marriage ceremony. Whatever laughable form this ceremony may have taken in the modern times on account of our follies and foibles, it was not so in the past. The Samavartan was not performed in each and every case. The Samavartan is more or less a function similar to that of the university convocation of the present times. The degree is conferred only upon him who has earned it. So also the Samavartan was performed in the case of a disciple who has successfully completed his Vedic studies. One authority on the Grihya-Sutras actually says that only one who is competent to explain the meaning of the Vedas is eligible for the 'Samavartan' function, and not any one who knows the Vedas merely by heart.

But as times changed, the Samavartan was also transformed like the Upakarma into a physical ceremony to be undergone by every one irrespective of the consideration whether one has mastered the Vedas or not. The authors of the law-books however did prescribe some minimum qualifications for the performance of this ceremony. Some little knowledge of the Vedas if not the mastery over them and the scrupulous observance of the course and conduct of the life of a Brahmachari were considered to be necessary for the Samavartan. No age could therefore be prescribed for this ceremony as the same varied from student to student according to his capacities and understanding. But generally the ceremony fell somewhere

between the age of twenty to twenty-four. The Brahmachari had by this time grown up into a man. He had a beard. He had Brahmachari's 'Danda', etc. The time had come to abandon all these.

The Brahmachari was kept in a room till mid-day, when after the Sun came over-head he was brought out. A shave followed with gifts of cows. The Brahmachari was not allowed to come out in the morning as the prescription tells us that the Sun being tender, would be affected by the prowess and lustre of the Brahmachari. Then followed the various functions in which one-by-one the Brahmachari cast off his long-associated equipments, and took to new things. It is interesting to note that the preceptor who had ordered the disciple never to use hot water and aromatic oils, flower garlands, and soft garments, umbrellas and shoes, now brings forward with a smile and patriarchal love, all these pleasing things which were denied to the Brahmachari, and offers them to him by his own hand. He gives his dear disciple a hot water bath, a soft silken garment, flower garlands, shoes and an umbrella. The Brahmachari then offers his worship to the Agni. Prayers follow that the disciple should get as many good students as his preceptor and that he should be able to continue the great mission of his Guru. At this time the disciple was offered Madhuparka. The 'Snatak', as was the disciple who had acquired the learnings called then, put on the new garments. He was taken for a ride on the elephant back. The Guru led him to the assembly of the learned and introduced him to them as one equal in knowledge to himself. The assembly would then be over. Thus was the learned scholar ushered on the threshold of life.

These ceremonies of Upanayan and Samavartan were also common to the studies of sciences and arts like the 'Dhanur-Veda' and the 'Ayurveda'. The Dhanur-Veda relates to the knowledge of the science of war and more particularly to the use of arms. A Brahman disciple who wanted to be initiated into the Military science was given an arrow, a Kshatriya was given a sword, a Vaishya a lance, and a Shudra a mace. The study of the Vedas was permitted only for the first three classes; but in the case of the Dhanur-Veda and Ayurveda, there was

no such restriction, and all the four Varnas were eligible for them. Naturally any one or any of the four classes could be initiated into the studies. It should be noted here that the ancient preceptors never kept anything as secrets unrevealed to their disciples. They delivered all knowledge they had to their competent disciples. After the studies the Samavartan was performed. That ceremony was called 'Churika-bandhan' in the case of the Samavartan ceremony of the disciple in the Dhanur-Veda. On some auspicious day the preceptor, after the candidate had performed his worship and offered his prayers, tied a sword round his waist. That was the convocation of the disciple. This ceremony was prevalent in Rajasthan till almost the end of the nineteenth century in all the Rajput families. The ceremony was called in the local language 'Khadga-bandhan'—the tying of the sword, which had to be performed after the completion of the education and before the marriage ceremony.

We have just described the convocation ceremony of the disciples studying different lores and learning, including Military science of Dhanur-Veda. A question may be asked, if there was at all any possibility of any sort of Military science being taught in the Vedic times. While it is difficult to offer any direct evidence in regard to the imparting of Military education in the Vedic Ashramas, it will have to be conceded that unless we presume this sort of Military training, so many other things mentioned in the text cannot be satisfactorily explained. For instance, there are sufficient reasons and evidence to show that the soldiers in the Vedic times used to put on peculiar gown and cover it with a sort of an armour and their heads with helmets. There is further a description of the infantry men on march in some sort of Military style, keeping pace. That is the description of the army of the Marut gods, which used to march in perfect order, with lances on shoulders. If Dhanur-Veda and some sort of Military training have been included in the vast curriculum of the Vedic education, then there is nothing astounding in having a convocation ceremony on the conclusion of the training.

Having thus examined the significance of the important ceremonies and rituals connected with the Brahmacharya, we

shall now turn to the rules and regulations, the codes and conducts of Brahmachari in the Ashrama the subjects of his study and so on.

✓The period of Brahmacharya was generally of twelve years. Shvetaketu had undergone this full period of twelve years in the Ashrama. There were, however, a small number of scholars who devoted a larger number of years and some few who followed that course even up to the end of their life as there were a larger number who abandoned the course much earlier. But the general rule was to go through this course for about twelve years before entering the second stage of life namely of the house-holder. The law-givers were rather strict in maintaining that this period of Brahmacharya should not be unnecessarily prolonged beyond twelve years, entailing the avoidance of the responsibilities of a house-holder.

✓It is a belief common through the ages since the Vedic times, that a person is born with three debts on his head, namely, one due to the Rishis, second to the fore-fathers and the third due to the Gods. ✓The burden of the debt due to the Rishis is supposed to be discharged by the stay and study in the Ashrama. ✓The second debt, namely, due to the family and fore-fathers has to be liquidated by entering into married life and by procreation of progeny to continue the family-line. It is, therefore, considered objectionable to prolong this entry into the married stage beyond the proper age. According to Shukracharya it was an offence deserving punishment to stay in the Ashrama for more than the prescribed period.

A house-holder has been enjoined to the vow of 'Agnihotra' meaning the 'worship of fire'. This vow has to be taken, according to the prescriptions, after a house-holder begets a son but before his hair turn grey. That means a Vedic youth has been advised to enter into the married life, get a son, and while his hair is black, take up the vow of regular fire-worship. This age, therefore, must be about twenty-four or twenty-five.

“जात पुत्रः कृष्णकेशः अग्नीनादधीत ।”

There are indeed some illustrious instances of Brahmacharis who were called 'Naishtika'. 'Nishta' means death, and

'Naishthika' means that which endures till death. A wrong idea seems to have become current that in the Vedic age the practice of life-long bachelorhood was never prevalent. This was not the case as can be inferred from the lives of a number of reputed life-long bachelor sages. The 'worship of fire' was no doubt most highly recommended but that did not preclude the possibility of real Brahmacharis. If in the later literature a misconception evinced in some places had arisen that was possibly not supported by the right interpretation. There is a proverb * which tells us that the deaf, the dumb, the blind,

* पटुवादीनामनंशत्वादसामर्थ्याच्च शास्त्रतः ।

नियतं नैष्ठिकत्वं स्यात् स्वकर्मस्वनधिकारतः ॥

the impotent, and the dwarf and such other physically disabled or disfigured persons should not enter into a married life, but should observe life-long celibacy. This injunction seems to have been laid down for two reasons: firstly that these miserable individuals may not be fully able to enjoy the joys of life and to carry out the responsibilities of a householder; as also the fear that they may become the cause of the continuation of the disease and the deficiency in the progeny. On the other hand there are injunctions that a strong and intelligent Brahmachari, can take up to the last stage of 'Sanyas' even without entering the married stage if his inner urge impels him to renunciation. Ramakrishna Paramahansa used to say that entering a house-hold is like fighting the battle of life from inside a strong-hold. It is no doubt easier to carry on the struggle of life behind the trenches of a house-hold and the ties of family, rather than from an exposed stage of Brahmacharya, liable to be overwhelmed and defeated by the attacks of passions and pleasures. But there is no doubt that one who braves this danger and comes out successful deserves the honour of the society. How does such a man become the object of ridicule or censure of the society? Bharat has produced a galaxy of ever-shining luminaries of Brahmacharis, right from ancient times to the modern days. Look to that series of glorious supermen from Bhishma, Sankaracharya down to Swami Vivekanand.

✱ The Vedic system of Education had not failed in fulfilling

all the expectations as can be very satisfactorily illustrated by the examples of very large number of geniuses in all the walks of life throughout the ages in the past. The claim of famous seers of the Vedic times as well as the great thinkers and scientists were life-long celibates dedicated to studies in search of Truth. Like the Sanyasi the Brahmachari also coveted Moksha, liberation, as the ultimate objective. The Brahmachari pursued the studies and practised penance as the means to that end as the Sanyasi adopted concentration and Samadhi. ✓The life-long Brahmachari stayed with his Guru and died at his feet. ✓In the absence of the guru he remained in the Ashram. Like the great Sages Kanva and Valmiki, these Brahmacharis became the Directors of the Ashramas very much like the Chancellors of our modern universities. Yuan Chowang, the Chinese pilgrim, who visited this country in 6th century has recorded in following terms what he saw about the Brahmacharis in the Ashramas. He says: 'They were held in highest esteem by the Society, though they did not so much mix in it. Brahmacharis were totally indifferent to praise and censure. They held the appreciation and condemnation both alike like 'Sthitapragnas'. ✓Ceaseless devotion to the study and the search of truth was their only preoccupation. On occasions when they wanted some information, they could travel over long distance of hundreds of miles without the shadow of a strain on their faces. Many of these avowed Brahmacharis were born in wealthy homes. But they had boldly abandoned the rich houses to prefer a life of begging in quest of knowledge. Poverty and privacy which they had embraced of their own accord was never thought by them to be any disgrace; but rather an embellishment. Philosophy and search of truth were their only anxieties.'

It was this plain living and unadulterated devotion demanded of a searcher of truth that produced Brahmacharis, who in their life-times with the indefatigable labour discovered truths in every department of knowledge which raised Bharat so high as to be recognised as the Guru of the world. It is this knowledge of the truth and the actual living according to the ideals that was the base on which they stood. It is no wonder that these great Bharatiyas should earn unreserved appreciations from friends and foes alike.

We will now look broadly into the daily routine of a Brahmachari. The disciples in the Ashram used to get up in the early hours of the morning. After the baths they engaged themselves in the task of kindling the sacrificial fire. It should not be lost sight of that the sacrifice was a compulsory performance in every household and hermitage, and the fire had to be set aflame every morning. This attendance on the sacrificial fire every morning and evening was an obligation unavoidable for a Brahmachari. After the prayers to the Sun and the Fire were over, the Brahmacharis turned to the study right up to the noon meals. With a little siesta after lunch, they again took to studies. In the afternoon the disciples went to the forest for procuring the fire-wood and the sacrificial sticks. This was their time of the day's relaxation and some sports. After the Sun-set the Brahmacharis offered their evening prayers, and oblations to the Fire. This was generally the routine of the disciples in the hermitages right up to the rise of Buddhism and after. There is no reason to believe that the life of Brahmacharis differed in the Vedic times from that in the later Upanishadic age.

The hermitages of the Vedic sages attracted students from poor homes as also from palaces. But no distinction or discrimination was made in the treatment given to princes and paupers by the noble sages. This sense of equality impressed upon the young minds of the students the right sense of social conduct. Each and everyone whether he came from the house of a king or a country man had to abide by the same rules of life, practise the same self-controls, and restraints in regard to the enjoyment of the objects of senses. All were taught on the same level without any consideration of their material conditions of life. This brought about invariably a sure sense of brotherhood, spirit of sacrifice and devotion to simple living and high thinking. The ideal before them all was their noble preceptor. It was impossible for the vices and the vicissitudes of life to creep in the Ashram and corrupt the young disciples. The Brahmachari had to beg his daily bread and bowl of rice without any exception. The Gopath Brahman enjoins that

कुञ्जवामनजात्यंघ्रिबपह्वर्तारोगिणाम् ।

व्रतचर्या भवेत्तेषां यावज्जीवमनंशतः ॥

every Brahmachari who desires to pursue this course of Brahmacharya shall have to procure his daily food by begging in the prescribed houses.

The later prescriptions in the law book of Manu and the Bhagwat Puran also lay emphatic stress upon this injunction of begging by a Brahmachari. The sage Atri for instance, observes that the food which a Brahmachari collects as 'Madhukari' is by all means the best. It is better than maintaining on a single vegetable or milk, or a pound of rice, for none of these can equal even by one-sixteenth the begged food.

शाकभक्षाः पयोभक्षा ये चान्ये यावशाकिनः ।

ते सर्वे भैक्ष्यभिक्षस्य कलां नार्हन्ति षोडशीम् ॥

The Brahmachari who fails to beg his food at least once in a week is censured by the Law Books and accorded punishment for his lapse. A child Brahmachari was of course exempted from this rigorous course. The Brahmachari was required to go for begging only after entering the 12th year till which time he was served food in the house of his preceptor. It is gathered from Manu Smriti that rich parents used to send provisions for their children to the hermitages. This generous provision by wealthy citizens could make it easy for improvised and poor students to find their bread in the preceptor's home.

This system of collecting food by the student disciples is unique in this country. It at once solves the problem of food of the deserving and ambitious students. On account of this tradition, hardly any deserving student has not been able to prosecute his studies in the country for reasons of poverty. When we recall the number of instances especially from Maharashtra where some of the most front-rank leaders of even this century born in poverty, but who rose to their eminent positions in life, had pursued their studies by begging food, the efficacy and significance of this system will be valued.

✓ Education in ancient India was free. It was considered to be disgraceful to expect or accept remuneration and fees for

tuition from the students in the ancient system of Education. It was but proper that this practice of begging food by the Brahmachari came as very helpful. If it solved the problem of the poor student, it instilled a sense of discipline and spirit of humility in the mind of a rich disciple. The society also considered it to be its obligation to feed the deserving students.

The social obligation was given a religious sanction by the Hindu codes of conduct. The Apastamb Dharma Sutras 1-1-3-24 lay down 'a Brahmachari when he is denied food by the females of a household and turned out empty-handed, he takes away with him all the merit accumulated by that household by sacrifice, gifts, etc., and becomes the cause of the disappearance of his progeny, cattle and the spirit.'

“श्रीणां प्रत्याचक्षणां समादितो ब्रह्मचारी इष्टं दत्तं हुतं प्रजां पशुं ब्रह्मवर्चसं भन्नायं वृद्धो ।”

The Gopath Brahman commends to a house-holder that when a Brahmachari goes to his doors, he should ask his wife to give him food otherwise he would remove his merit.

“ते देवा भुवन् ब्राह्मणो वा अयं ब्रह्मचर्यं चरिष्यति ब्रूतास्मै भिक्ष इति ।”

Thus were social obligations ratified by religious prescriptions which became almost mandatory on every house-hold.

“गृहपतिर्ब्रूत बहुचारी गृहपत्या इति किमस्या वृज्रोता ददत्या इति इष्टापूर्तं सुकृतद्रविणमवरुन्ध्यादिति तस्माद् ब्रह्मचारिणे अहरहः भिक्षां दद्यात् गृहिणी मामेयुरिष्टापूर्तं सुकृतद्रविणमवरुन्ध्यादिति ।”

The Brahmachari was of course prohibited from collecting more than his needs and hoarding the gains of begging.

आहारादधिकं वर्णो न क्वचित् भैक्ष्यमाचरेत् ।

युज्यते स्तेयदोषेण कामतोऽधिकमाहरन् ॥

Manu observes that a Brahmachari should not beg more than his needs; if he does so he becomes chargeable with sin. It was also clearly understood that a Brahmachari was to cease begging as soon as he had finished his course of studies. Thus he was required to stand on his own legs and not become an unnecessary burden to the society. The Bodhayan Dharma Sutras lay down: 'For one who has rounded off his studies'

the course of begging is not dignifying... and will be considered as sinful.

“समावृत्तस्य भिक्षा अशुचिकरा ।”

The Atharva-Veda has elaborately given the code of conduct for the Brahmachari. Manu, Yajnavalkya, and the later Puran books all nicely explain the course and career of Brahmacharya and its significance in the social build-up of the Hindu life. There is hardly any difference between the Vedic and the later Puranic prescriptions regarding this course of Brahmacharya. We summarise below a picture of the life of a Brahmachari:

‘The Brahmachari should perform his morning and evening prayers and worship of the fire very punctually. Then he should appear before the elders, declare his full name and bow down in great humility. That done he should make himself ready to sit before his preceptor for the lessons and as soon as the call comes, he should start his studies. The Brahmachari should however never pester the Guru to give him lessons. He should only relate to the Guru what lessons he has finished and then await his directions. The disciple should always devote all his body, mind and speech in attention to the commands and his service of the Guru. The Guru of course imparts all the knowledge to such a disciple who is grateful, capable of understanding and digesting what is taught, one who is pure in body and mind, one who is not a back-biter or tell-taler but takes pleasure in saying good about others, one who is noble in character and ideal as a student; and lastly one who scrupulously maintains the discipline of his ashram. The Brahmachari should always wear his four symbols of Brahmacharya and should go to beg only in the households which are known to be meritorious. The Brahmachari is not to beg alms except for himself, his preceptor, the preceptor’s wife and son. Whatever he collects he should present it to Guru. Only after the direction of the Guru he should partake of what comes to his share and that without a word going out of his mouth in comment, with full satisfaction. The Brahmachari when he is not compelled by ill-health should not resort to only one house-hold for begging his

everyday food. If by chance he has to go for a feast on the occasion of a Shraddha ceremony (anniversary dinner), then he should partake the food excepting wine and flesh. He should not eat anything that has been the product of violence, killing, leftover crumbs, and the carcasses. He should always avoid any talk which borders on cruelty, on sex and feminine subjects, and which rouse violent or untruthful tendencies.

The Brahmachari has been enjoined not to indulge in pleasures of the body and mind. He has to avoid cosmetics and all such beautifying products which turn the body into a delicate and corruptible one. He should avoid the use of shoes, umbrella and such other means which though they protect the human body from the cruelties of nature at the same time make it irresistible to pain and hardship. The Brahmachari has of course to keep himself aloof and detached from music, dance, drama, and such other degrading entertainments of life. If he does that, he will be a master of his own senses and shall not become a victim of attachment, greed, anger, jealousy and such other weaknesses of the mind.'

This was the general code prescribed for a Brahmachari. It is not that in deserving cases and on proper occasions exceptions were not made. The emphasis was, however, that the Brahmachari should not become a slave to the weaknesses which human body is heir to.

This system of education comprehended that the Brahmachari must complete his education at the feet of his master in the 'ashrama'. The rule used to be invariably observed right up to the middle ages. These hermitages were generally situated a little away from the crowded habitations of town and city. That protected them from the inroads of vices and luxuries of the city life. The residents of the ashrama lived a natural course of life detached from the stresses and strains of civilisation as well as the pressures and struggles of life. Plain living in natural surroundings automatically ushered high thinking about the fundamentals which governed the life of human beings, in this world. The descriptions which we have of these hermitages of sages like Kanva, Valmiki, Vishvamitra, etc., in the Upanishads, Puranas, and the later literature are indeed so real and pleasing that any one would wish their

return back. Bana Bhatta has given a realistic description of the hermitage of the sage Jabali. These ashramas undoubtedly stabilised and strengthened the foundation of the society by inculcating in every young generation sound and noble values of life. Realising the function of these ashramas, political philosophers like Kautilya have enjoined on the rulers to allot convenient premises for the hermitages of such Kulapati Brahmanas. Every one that passed some time of his life in such ashramas carried a life-long impression to be copied personally. The illustrious names of acharyas like Drona and Sandipini and the glorious disciples whom they moulded, Arjuna and Shri Krishna, remain to this day as conjuring figures before the child-mind of Bharat.

CHAPTER X

THE VEDIC TEACHER, PUPILS AND SUBJECTS OF STUDY

THE Guru, meaning the teacher, generally occupied an unrivalled place in the Vedic system of education. The Guru was considered to be the spiritual father of the pupil. The parents usher a soul to life on the globe but according to the Bharatiya notion, it is the Guru who gives him the light. It is the conviction of the Hindu mind that with the grace of a Guru any one may attain the highest knowledge in any science or art. The story of 'Ekalavya' told in the Mahabharata is an enchanting illustration of this conviction. Ekalavya was a child of a forester. The master of Dhanur-Veda, Drona, did not like to impart lessons to this low-born and backward child. Ekalavya was not, however, discouraged. He prepared a mud idol and under its auspices he began to practise archery. In due time this boy became so proficient in the art that it is said he surpassed the most favoured pupil of the master Drona.

The faith in the power of a Guru which came to persist through later generations, permeated even in the rebel sects like Buddhism and Jainism which also copied the self-same code of conduct for their children. There is a day marked in honour of the Guru in the Hindu calendar. The Guru Purnima—the full-Moon day in the month of Ashada is the day for the worship of and offerings to the Guru. Great saints and sages, masters of literature and arts, kings and conquerors, paupers and princes, poets and philosophers everyone without exception bow down before their Guru on this day, present their offerings at his feet, and pray for his blessings.

All the great men who have attained the highest glories in various walks of life have been unanimous in ascribing all the credit to their Gurus. In Bharat the Guru is recognised to be the key with which every secret of knowledge can be attained. In the field of higher secrets of life and philosophy, there is no alternative but to approach 'with samidhas in hands'

a Guru who is well-versed in the Vedas and the knower of the Brahma. It is a conviction of the Hindu mind that no one can acquire knowledge, not only in occult subjects but also in mundane arts and sciences without the personal guidance of a Guru. It is the belief in this country that one can understand the meanings of words in a book but never grasp the sense underlined it without the directions of a Guru. A Sanskrit addage fully explains this. A poet observes: 'The learning which someone acquires by dint of his hard labour from the books but which lacks the realisation of the secret for want of master's blessings does never shine in the assembly of the learned like a woman ashamed of a child conceived from a paramour.'

पुस्तकप्रत्ययाधीतं नाधीतं गुरुसन्निधौ ।

आजते न सभामध्ये जारगर्भे इव स्त्रियः ॥

✓The institution of Guru could ceaselessly produce illustrious disciples and in turn retain its glorious position in the structure of the society. What made this tradition an ever-shining institution in the Vedic times was the uncompromising intellectuality and the incorruptible integrity of the masters that kept the same ever bright. ✓Those Vedic teachers in the hermitages were never touched or affected by any false sense of dignity or dishonour in regard to the receiving or imparting of real knowledge or were never vitiated by the unjustified pride and prejudice. The Gopath Brahman tells a very interesting tale illustrating this point. There were two acharyas by name Maudgalya and Maitreya. Once in a discussion Maitreya was defeated in arguments. What must have that defeated Acharya done on the occasion? He came to the conclusion that as he had himself not acquired full knowledge he had no right to profess to teach others. He therefore closed his school and approached Maudgalya to learn the secret from him. This disarming integrity was a special character of the masters teaching in these institutions of learning, right from the days of the Vedas to the Moghal period. An astonishing anecdote is well-known about Sankaracharya and the learned Pandit Mandan Misra. When the test of learning of the two great masters took place, Sankaracharya did not feel a speck of a doubt in selecting the

learned wife of his adversary as the umpire in their contest. The wife of Mandan Misra respected the truth so impartially that she did not hesitate to announce the defeat of her own husband in the contest. It was after this that the vanquished adversary Mandan Misra renounced the worldly life, became a Sanyasi and a disciple of Sankaracharya.

Such is the inspiring history of our institution of learning and the tradition of the teachers in them. As late as the Moghal rule in this country, this was the most unexpected course of common behaviour of the Gurus. In the days of Shah Jahan, there lived a great Pandit named Appaya Dikshit in the South. This Pandit was a follower of 'Dualism'. On one occasion he was vanquished by a learned Pandit from the Shringeri Monastery. Appaya Dikshit renounced the world on the spot, and became the follower of the 'Monist' school and preached monism all through his life thereafter.

The conditions of the hermitages were very much different from the educational institutions of the present days. There was never any paucity of good teachers nor an unmanageable rush of students. The students having had to stay under the eyes and protection of the Guru, all through their course of education, he could very well judge his wards and guide them personally at every stage and difficult occasions. The association of other talented inmates also helped to stir a healthy rivalry and aspiration in the young minds. It is no wonder that every student turned out a great master and deserved the blessing, 'may you get a large number of students yourself'. It is because of such intensive courses of studies that there was no need of training schools for teachers in those days as it is today.

The Prashnopanishad tells a revealing story. A sage says:

“हिरण्यनाभः कौसल्यो राजपुत्रः मामुपेत्य एनं प्रश्नमपृच्छत् । षोडश कलं भरद्वाज पुरुषं वेत्थ तमहं कुमारमब्रुवम् नाहमिमं वेद । यद्यहमिममवेदिषत् कथं ते नावक्ष्यमिति समूले वा एष परिशुष्यति योऽनृतमभिवदति तस्मान्नाहर्हाम्यनृतं दक्षुम् । स तूष्णीम् रथमारुह्य प्रवव्राज ।”

(Prashnopanishad 6)

'Hiranyanabha, a prince from the Kausal country came to me and asked: "O Bharadwaja, do you know the person who is

supposed to have sixteen facets?" I said to that prince, "No, I do not know. If I were to know Him, would I not tell you about Him? Know well, that a man who tells lies to a person who approaches him for knowledge, is destroyed completely. I am incapable of telling you the untruth in this matter." On this the prince mounted his chariot and rode away without a word.' The story needs no comments. It illustrates the devotion to and the value of truth in life.

✓ The admissions to the hermitages were by selection of pupils after testing their abilities. There is a general charge by some people who have not properly understood the real spirit of the system of Vedic education that the priest class had selfishly reserved to themselves the task of teaching and preaching the society. The objectors however forget that there was no worldly gain in this profession of preaching and teaching in those days which was completely free and without any fees. It is true that the kings and princes used to send their assistance to the hermitages; but that was not in any way very covetable nor sufficient. It must be admitted that the Brahman class had shown very high character in keeping free more profitable professions of 'rulers and traders' to other classes and voluntarily undertaken this onerous task of educating the society without the least expectations of monetary gains. The only substantial acquisition would be in the form of gifts by the pupils after their studies were over; but even in this respect there never used to be any sort of previous agreements or precedent conditions. On the other hand, if someone entered into such an agreement of charges for the education or the amount of 'guru-dakshina', then that man would be condemned as a sinful fellow.

“यस्यागमः केवलजीविकायै तं ज्ञानपथं वणिजं वदन्ति ।”

✓ Kalidas observes: "The Brahmin whose learning is used by him only to earn his livelihood is really a trader who has opened a shop of exchange of learning for money." ✓ A boy with good character and with capacities to understand and learn a subject for which he goes to a hermit school was never refused admission. ✓ Except the Vedas all other branches of learning were freely taught to anyone even outside the

three classes, and there too, there was never any favouritism or preference for the three classes. Vedas were of course not taught to them for various logical and sensible reasons.

The Vedas were excluded from the subjects of studies of other than the first three 'Varnas' for an excusable and justifiable reason, namely, the honest faith of the Brahman class in those days that they were 'mantras' whose pronunciations were very much connected with the good or bad of the society. There was another practical hurdle also. As has been already discussed in a foregoing chapter, the Vedic mantras were dependent upon the science of 'sound'... and, the ability to correctly pronounce the Sanskrit alphabets with all their intricate accents and phones. If we observe and take into consideration how far even in the present times the other 'varnas' are able to recite the Vedic mantras with correct pronunciations and phones, it will become apparent, why and with what anxiety the Brahmanas excluded the people of other 'varnas' from studying the Vedas. Except the learning which had no direct dependence upon the strict science of sound all branches of knowledge were kept open for studies for one and all. There is one relieving factor even in this prohibition. Conscious that the residue class would be deprived of the benefits of the Vedic knowledge and wisdom, the noble teachers took all the labour and care to produce the vast ocean of literature called the Puranas and the Mahabharata which are also valued as high as the Vedas, the latter one being actually regarded as the fifth Veda. One thing is at least as clear as the daylight, namely, that the Brahman class did not place this ban with any motive of selfish gain in pleasure and prosperity and privileges. If one recounts the rigid rule that the Vedic teacher has not to accept any remuneration or sell his learning which was observed since the ancient times right up today, even at great sufferings and hardships for the teacher and his family, no one will dare to impute such a mean motive on the poor but learned Brahman. Instances are not wanting, even in the present age of noble teachers like Acharya Rajeshwar Shastri Dravid of Banaras, who are living up to the ideals of the Vedic seers embracing poverty but never thinking of compromising their age-sacred principles. That one contemporary

example is a standing proof of how deeply the Vedic idealism must have been ingrained in the blood and bones of the people.

✓ If the Vedic teachers were not to charge tuition fees, how did they maintain their families and their hermitages, one may rightly ask. ✓ We have already referred to the practice of giving gifts to the Guru after the course of learning was over. ✓ Good disciples gave rich 'Dakshinas' to the Gurus. There is an interesting dialogue in the Brihadaranyakopanishad between King Janak and the Sage Yajnavalkya. The dialogue which throws clear light on some aspects of this practice is as follows:—

“जनको ह वैदेह आसांचक्रे अथ ह याज्ञवल्क्य आववाज । तं होवाच याज्ञवल्क्य किमर्थमचारीः पशुनिच्छन्नपुंशतानीत्युभयमेव सम्प्राप्ति होवाच ।”

“इस्तिऋषभसहस्रं ददामीति होवाच जनको वैदेहः स होवाच याज्ञवल्क्यः पिता मे अमन्यत न अननुषिष्यं हरेदिति ।”

‘Once Sage Yajnavalkya visited the court of King Janak. The king asked the sage what had brought him there to “get some cows” from the king, or to teach him something. It will be remembered that King Janak was also renowned for his great learning and wisdom. Yajnavalkya told him that he had visited the king’s court with both the objects. Then there was a long discourse between the king and the sage. The latter satisfied the king with all his learning. The king was very much pleased and offered to give him “a thousand bullocks and elephants”.’ The sage however sharply replied: ‘My father has instructed me never to accept the “Dakshina”—gifts from pupils, unless they are thoroughly and fully instructed.’

Such was the practice of rewarding the Gurus when the education of the pupils was over. There is another enlightening story about the practice. Kalidas tells it in his great epic as follows:—

‘There was one great master of “mantras” Sage Kautsa. He had learnt at the feet of the Vedic Sage, Varatantu. After the completion of the education, Kautsa insisted on his Guru Varatantu to name the “Dakshina”. The Guru aware of the poverty of Kautsa told him that he did not desire anything from him. But Kautsa was not pleased and he pressed the Guru to say what he wanted. Now Varatantu a little exasperated,

wanted to test the ability of his disciple and to shake his pride. He asked him to bring fourteen crores of golden coins. Hearing this unexpected demand, however, Kautsa was stunned. He approached King Raghu for his assistance. It was the practice in those days to help poor disciples to pay their Guru-Dakshinas. When Kautsa came, Raghu had just performed a great sacrifice in which he had distributed all his wealth. He was in a fix. If he said no, Kautsa would go to some other patron and Raghu would forever be damned as a standing subject of a censure legend. Raghu therefore did not like this. He asked the sage to wait. The story goes, Raghu forced Kubera, the Lord of Wealth, to shower down the requisite amount of golden coins in the hermitage of Varatantu. Keeping the dressing of the story apart, the moral is too clear to need any comments.

The Brahmachari was called twice-born not in vain. The Guru and his wife took all the parental care of the ward in their charge. The Brahmachari stayed in the 'ashram' not merely to gather knowledge but more to learn the wisdom and to mould his life according to the ideal patterns. He kept his personal status and other considerations outside the 'ashram' in which he behaved as one common and equal inmate with all the others. The story of Shri Krishna staying in the 'ashram' of a very poor 'Guru' Sandipani and performing all and sundry jobs just like ordinary pupils is well-known.

The Guru had of course all the authority over the pupil during his stay in the ashram. He could punish him for indiscipline, by starving him or prescribing some arduous jobs. He could in appropriate cases turn him out of the ashram. According to the Apastamba, the Guru could not however give any corporal punishment to the erring disciple. But according to Manu and Gautama there was no objection if the teacher chastised the uncontrollable students by caning them on the backs. It is quite obvious that no distinction was made in the matter of punishments between sons of rich and poor parents. We have referred to these practices to illustrate how much in details our codes had thought of the various problems concerning education. There is a tale from the Bauddha Jatak

in which a Guru is said to have beaten his pupil the prince of Banaras to dissuade him from his habit of thieving.

The pupils were all respectful of their Guru. They never showed any indiscretion or disrespect to the person of Guru nor ever tolerated it from any other. But it may happen that a Guru may be unworthy or commit some censurable action. The code of conduct warns that in such a case when the Guru might have inadvertently committed a mistake, the pupil should approach him in private and bring his fall to his notice.

“प्रमादानाचार्यस्य बुद्धिपूर्वकं वा नियमातिक्रमं रहसि बोधयेत् ।”

The Mahabharata which is regarded as the ‘Fifth Veda’ lays down that ‘a Guru who has fallen from the right path should

गुरोरप्यवलिप्तस्य कार्यकार्यमजानतः ।

उत्पथप्रतिपन्नस्य परित्यागो विधीयते ॥

be forthwith discarded.’ It will be remembered that the great Bhishma had to give a tough fight to Parshuram for this very reason. The Great Ram is known to have brushed aside the advice of his most revered Guru Vasishtha as it violated an injunction—prescribed by the code of conduct. This is the difference between the ideology of Bharat and of other nations. Here a Guru is generally regarded as respectful as the God ; but when he committed a lapse, he was brushed aside.

Every hermitage with a capable teacher had a number of pupils for different studies. The nature of studies and instructions was such that, whereas a very intelligent student had good scope to finish his course early according to his capacity, even the dullards could not skip over in idleness their lessons. The teacher used to see first how much the student had understood, what had been imparted before and then only would he go ahead. It is interesting to note what Yuan Tsang has recorded: ‘The Bharatiya teachers had a master-hand in liquidating the tendencies in bright students of idleness and of shirking the studies.’ The teachers followed all ingenious ways of sharpening the intellects of the scholars. There were no examinations or public convocations in those days and hence the students who had mastered sciences, arts and learnings, had no means of advertising their achievements except by entering the arena of practical world of competition, assemblies of learned men

for debates and discussions, and actual demonstrations of their knowledge and skills. That was of course a very effective mode of establishing a reputation in lores and arts. The society also used to accord the highest regard and patronage to such masters once their greatness was established.

What were the subjects taught in these ashramas? From the reference in the Vedic literature, it can be shown that besides the Vedas, philosophies and the literature, so many other sciences, arts and crafts needful for successful careers in life were also included in the studies in the ashramas. The list of the subjects referred to in different places as taught and mastered in the ashramas is as follows:

(1) Vedas, (2) Itihasas and Puranas, (3) Narshansi Gathas (histories of dynasties), (4) the science of prosody, (5) Officiation in the performance of a sacrifice, (6) Geometry (very much necessary for one who had to officiate in a sacrifice), (7) Astronomy, (8) Military training—the art of war and the use of arms, (9) Music, (10) Occult lores, (11) Carpentry, (12) Brick-laying, (13) Archery and the science of Dhanur Veda, (14) Charioteering, (15) Attendance on horse and horsemanship, (16) Medicine, (17) Blacksmithship, (18) Metallurgy, (19) Snake-charms, (20) Art of tending eagles and birds.

These find special and specific mentions in the Vedic literature. But these were certainly only the few things that came to be mentioned in due course. It is not logical to infer what is not mentioned as non-existent. The point is whether it was essential to make mentions of the other arts, crafts and sciences.

There will be no two opinions in regard to the great significance which the Vedic people attached to learning and arts. The Rig-Veda mentions: 'In course of the performance of

“यज्ञेनवाचः पदवीयं भायन् तां अमु अविदत् ऋषिषु प्रविशाम् ।”

sacrifices, good people came to the path of enlightened speech; and as they went by it, “divine speech” entered the hearts of the Rishis.’ In another place the bard poetically observes: ‘Some

“उतत्वस्मि तन्वं विसृजे जायेषपत्ये उशती सुवासाः ।”

such gifted talent rises upon the horizon to whom this divine speech surrenders all her secret like a devout and adorned wife

eagerly awaiting the arrival of her husband delivers herself to him.'

The Atharva-Veda goes further in explaining how Indra attained his supreme position amongst the gods. It says:

“इन्द्रो वै ब्रह्मचर्येण देवेभ्यः स्वराभवत् ।”

‘Indra got that highest position amongst the gods only because of his Brahmacharya and the penance for the studies of the Vedas.’ The Kathak recension expressly lays down that ‘Brahmanhood does not depend only upon birth in the class but more upon the knowledge of the Vedas.’ The Taittiriya text observes: ‘He alone is a Brahman sage who has acquired good knowledge of the Vedas.’

“एष वै ब्राह्मणऋषिः आर्षेयः य सुश्रुवान् ।”

‘Once some old men approached a young intelligent teacher to learn something. The young man addressed the elderly students as ‘boys’. The old men felt offended and complained to the gods about the impudent behaviour of the young man. The gods are reported to have thought over the delicate incident and advised them as follows:—

न तेन वृद्धो भवति येनास्य पलितं क्षिरः ।

यो वै युवाऽप्यधीयानः तं देवा स्थविरं विदुः ॥

‘Merely gray hair do not make men old nor respectable. The gods honour even a young person who is well-versed in learning.’ (Manu 2-156). Manu further comments: ‘Simply because a man has grown old with gray hair, or has wealth or rich relatives, he does not become respectable; the sages consider him to be worthy who has acquired knowledge and who knows the Law and abides by it.’ (Manu 2-154).

न हायनैः न पलितैः न विज्ञेन न बंधुभिः ।

ऋषयः चक्रिरे धर्मं योऽनूचानः स नो महान् ॥

In the Bharatiya thought, greater significance is attached even more than the sacrament of marriage which opens the way to get children for the continuity of the family to the sacrament of ‘Upanayan’ which enables the Brahmachari to acquire knowledge and wisdom. It is the conviction of the Vedic people that a person could conveniently avoid all other sacraments without any very great loss, but he cannot avoid ‘Upanayan’, which if he does

he falls from the status of 'Arya', and is censured as a 'Vratya'—almost an excommunicated. So great was the importance attached to this ceremony of 'Upanayan' which was an admission to the Brahmacharya—a condition precedent to the acquisition of knowledge. We cannot underestimate the regard which the Vedic people had for learning and education, which they placed as the highest respectable achievement in life. It will be recollected what we have narrated before that a Brahmachari is considered notionally to be more brilliant than the tender morning Sun. The Snatak was required to be honoured with 'Madhuparka' as many times as he visited a house, which honour was accorded to a guest only once a year. This exceptional regard is shown by the Vedic people only to the king besides a Snatak and to none else. But even the king gave way to a 'Snatak' in honour if he crossed him on the path. The Snatak was above all rules of joy or mourning which were applicable to the common men in the society. That special concession was recognised with a view to eliminate all impediments in the course of studies.

The Bharatiya Dharma Shastra lays much stress upon the obtainment of the progeny to continue the line. The begetting of a son is considered to be a release from the paternal debt. But the Brihadaranyakopanishad lays down that the 'Pitru-Rina'—paternal debt is not wiped off merely by begetting a son but by seeing that the son is well disciplined and learned in the lores. Madhavacharya while commenting on the prescription observes:—

“न हि पुत्रजननमात्रेण पितुः ऋणं । किं तर्हि ! सम्यगनुशिष्टेन पुत्रेण शास्त्रीयेषु कर्मसु सम्यगनुष्ठितेषु पश्चात् ऋणं संपद्यते ।”

✓ It is not merely by producing a son that the father becomes paid off his debt to the Pitris. He must see that the son acquires all necessary learning and performs all prescribed functions and obligations, when alone he can be said to have paid off his debt to the parents in full satisfaction.'

It will be interesting to note here that a Brahmachari got some privileges in law as he had in the social contract. Against a Brahmachari who was engaged in the acquisition of knowledge in an ashram time did not run in law and he had fifty

years' period to sue to recover usurped property as against thirty years' period in normal cases.

The most significant and estimable factor in the system of Vedic education was that the institutes of education, the ashramas were never subservient to the power or authority of the realm. Inside the hermitage no writ of a king or emperor had any authority. The learned master of the ashram, the Guru was all in all. That saved the institutes and the education from the unwarranted and ignorant meddling of the administration or the overbearing ministers. The injunction was that even the kings had to enter the premises of these institutes with all humility and respect; and the wonder is that even small hermit boys had the boldness to warn a mighty king like Dushyant to observe the injunction, which he was almost violating in rashness.

It is not the intention to note here good and bad points in the Bharatiya system as compared with the Western. Lest it is lost sight of, we only want to draw the attention to one glaring difference between the two systems. In the Western systems of education and generally all the modern methods, there is almost total absence of the spiritual outlook to life. In the Bharatiya system greater stress and special attention was focussed on how to inculcate the spiritual values of life which alone according to the Bharatiya thinkers helped to resolve the conflicts and confusions in the struggle between individuals and societies. This spiritual evaluation raised an individual high above mundane considerations and cultivated in him an uncompromising spirit in regard to the individual and social ethics. All the great Western nations are indeed clamouring for the good results but have failed to incorporate a basic course for inculcating a liking for spiritualism in their systems and curriculums. From all the foregoing discussions it must have been apparent to the readers that the Bharatiya system, in whatever it undertook, never erred in first determining the purpose. All the efforts were to drive oneself to the grand purpose of life. The Bharatiya system of education had an unmistakable purpose before it. The American and the other Western nations are lamenting that they have failed to find the real purpose of education. It is said now that these societies are purposeless

societies. The whole trend is towards turning out masses of men, as if it were, from the same moulds with uniform masks without any chances of kicking off the commonness and rising higher to unique distinctions. It is tantamount to killing the individual and converting him into robots. As we have said it is not the purpose here to analyse the comparative values, virtues and drawbacks of the Bharatiya and non-Bharatiya systems. We leave that to be judged by the readers. But it would be proper to summarise the basic considerations on which the Vedic system of education was evolved. They are as follows:—

(1) The place, functions, and the obligations of an individual in the structure of the Vedic society and the relation of the individual soul *vis-a-vis* the universal soul having been firmly determined the spiritual idealism was made not only a subject of study, or an outlook deserving emphasis, but the very basis of the Vedic system of education.

(2) The purpose of Vedic studies was to make the society invincible and prosperous by inculcating into every individual, spiritual virtues and values which metamorphosed his mundane existence into divine life, as also by sowing in his hearts the urge for good robust life and the stir of discontent which enabled him to march ahead and excel others in all branches of physical progress.

(3) An ideal society presupposes ideal individuals. The Vedic education was planned and implemented with the clear objective of giving every disciple full scope and opportunity to the development of personality into as near as the ideal.

(4) This perfect growth of personality was achieved by systematic culture of character, virtues, devotion to duty and mastery in the pursuits undertaken.

(5) The institutes of hermitages which were the principal centres of Vedic education being completely out of bounds for the vices and vicissitudes of city life, the student world was automatically saved from the evil influences of these banes of civilisations. The atmosphere in the hermitages was completely free from the struggles and stresses of life which helped the students to prosecute their studies without any detractions.

(6) Life in the hermitages inculcated in the young impressionable minds of the students a natural and perfect sense of equality amongst all the inmates and co-pupils who irrespective of their status in the outside world lived, dressed, dined all in the same simple plain manner.

(7) The Vedic system of education was unique in one other respect, namely, that, in it, poverty was never a hurdle as it is in modern times. The only yard-stick was the intelligence and character of the pupil, granted which anyone could have the highest course of education.

(8) The limited number of pupils studying in the ashramas naturally enabled the teacher to mould every individual according to his propensities and capacities.

(9) All education was free, which while attracting only the deserving intellects raised its value in the estimation of the society as it never became or could become the means of earning money but only remained as an embellishment and a force which inspired joy and hopes of good life.

(10) The student class being always under the very nose of the ideal Guru, there was very little chance of vices or licentious tendencies creeping in their lives.

(11) Education was looked upon as a sacred thing and was associated with the vow of 'Brahmacharya', which naturally developed a holy attitude. The student poured all his attention in the acquisition of learning as a sacred power. But it must not be supposed, as is mistakenly done, that the natural tendencies of the taught were cramped or suppressed. The Brahmachari was not required to starve; rather the emphasis was, that he must feed himself well to build his body and mind healthy. There was no restraint on food but there were rules as to what he should and should not eat in order to grow a sound pious mind in a healthy body. It was never the intention of Brahmacharya that all should remain celibates; rather it was almost mandatory that in Brahmacharya everyone should gather knowledge, strength and practical wisdom and then enter into married worldly life with success.

(12) The ancient Vedic system has been accused of one failure namely that it was not efficient to generating the spirit of one nationhood amongst the taught. This accusation is however

grossly baseless. It is not borne out by historical evidence which rather proves the reverse. It is in fact too presumptuous to hurl such a charge against the system which for millenniums succeeded in a country like ours—ridden with differences of languages and divided by distances into separate regions, in pinning down the loyalties of multi-millions of people in the self-same religion and philosophy of life. The very fact that despite the diverse fissiparous tendencies, and disintegrating factors of life, there yet persists in the people of this country a common culture, and civilisation, one common and all-comprehensive religion absorbing numerous faiths and sub-sects in it, a common pride in the glorious historical past, and an indomitable hope and aspiration for the common destiny in the future, is surely too strong a self-defence against such a hollow and unwarranted charge that the Vedic system did not effectively feed the concept of one nationhood. On the other hand, it is our claim that amongst other blessings which the Vedic system conferred upon this nation the most visible and eloquent one is the basic concept of one nationhood—which the system has succeeded in inculcating in the very blood and bones of the people of this country so well that in spite of the passage of millenniums and the deliberate attacks and persistent efforts of numerous tribes of vandals and iconoclasts to liquidate it, the nation has remained one and indivisible.

(13) In Bharat knowledge was never considered a commodity of sale and purchase. The teachers considered it despicable to charge fees for giving knowledge. Only those who lived a pure and penanceful life devoted to studies and ever willing to help those who wanted to learn were in charge of great centres of learning. They never allowed any other considerations to vitiate their holy task of enlightening the people.

(14) The system of education in Vedic ideology was never subservient to the ruling authority. The kings and emperors bowed down before the great preceptors and acharyas of the hermitages. They patronised the centres of education without in the least trying to influence or interfere in the working and modes of these centres of learning.

A glance at some of these broad principles of the system of education in the Vedic times and after will convince the readers how and why the Vedic society produced such giant thinkers and personalities. It is quite an independent question if the system would become efficient and lend itself to be adopted in the present complex times. It is not relevant to the subject of the chapter to discuss if we should and could accept the Vedic system. But it must certainly be affirmed without any fear of contradiction or difference of opinion that in the conditions then prevailing the Vedic system was by far and most superior as could be judged from the results it produced.

It will be interesting to note what advice the teacher gave to the disciple after he had finished his studies. In the 'Sama-vartan' convocation, the acharya delivered the following address to the student: 'Speak the truth; know your duty and fulfil it. Do not commit any lapse in your study. (Retain the knowledge you have acquired by revising it, otherwise there is a chance of forgetting all that has been acquired simply by lapse of memory). Bring such a gift to your Guru as his Dakshina, as will please him, and then enter your worldly life to see that continuity of the family is not snapped. Never should you fall from truth even in mistake. Never should you deviate from duty even inadvertently. Never should you be indifferent in regard to the obtainment of worldly welfare. You should not ignore your studies and revisions. The obligations prescribed by the code of conduct towards gods and manes should never be avoided. Be thou devoted to the Mother. Be thou obedient to your Father. Be thou respectful to your teachers; be thou hospitable to the guests. That is the path of duty. Whatever good and meritorious actions are seen around should be copied and not the others. We are your teachers indeed; but you should consider our good actions to be your ideals and not our drawbacks and failures. It is your duty to show respect and offer an honourable seat to such of the Brahmanas who are meritorious when they appear before you. When you give in charity, give it with a faith and will and not by force against the will; give as would befit your status in life, and not in a miserly manner. Whatever you give, do it in humble manner.

Give anything that you wish, remembering the fact that you do not violate the law and that God is an ever watchful witness. All charity should be done with conviction and knowledge. Whenever some doubt creeps in your mind regarding what should be done and what should be avoided under certain circumstance bring to your mind what wise, thoughtful and selfless personalities did under similar circumstances or would do, and thus decide your course.'

(Taittiriya Upanishad, Shiksha Chapter).

This small piece is an epitome of advice to a young accomplished man ready to step on the stage of life after finishing his academic course of studies. We think the advice cannot be improved upon in substance or style by adding commentaries and explanations, or be matched by the tons of words which are being scattered over the winds every year in the convocation season of the modern universities.

This was the general system of imparting knowledge of the subjects in vogue then in the Vedic times and after. The pattern of the Vedic society persisted long after the Vedic times had elapsed and thousands of years had gone by. It can be generally said that even in the modern times much of our social behaviour, our institutions, and the basic ideas are much after the Vedic pattern, though there has been too much of inter-mixture. But as late as 1848, Dr. Laitnar, an English authority on Education who had the occasion to study the conditions in the Punjab and make a report on the same has passed very commendable observations in favour of the educational institutions which were beyond doubt the relics of the Vedic ideology.

Thus were the young generations of the nation trained and taught to undertake the heavy burdens of the society in the Vedic times. It may pertinently be asked if there was any provision and scope for the education of the female class in the Vedic system? What opportunities the Vedic system gave to woman? In fact what was the place of woman in the Vedic society? We shall examine this question in all its bearings in the next chapter.

CHAPTER XI

WOMAN IN THE VEDIC AGE

WHAT was the role of woman and her place in the Vedic society? There has been a lot of unwarranted misunderstanding in the non-Hindu world about the position of woman in the Hindu society. It will therefore be very interesting and profitable to look at the glorious status which a woman was accorded in the Vedic society.

“अर्धो ह वा एष आत्मनो यत् जाया ।”

‘What they call a wife is the half of a man.’ This assertion of the Shatapath Brahman at once states categorically the rights and the role of a woman in the life of the society. The Vedic people never underrated her capacities and status, nor ever imputed—religious disability to her. On the other hand, there are references to show that a person who did not marry was considered to be incompetent to perform a sacrifice.

“अयज्ञीयः वा एष यः अपत्नीकः ।”

The word ‘Patni’ connotes a sense of equality and justice which are due to a woman. According to the Taittiriya and Shatapath Brahmanas, a woman was required to be initiated along with the man, before the start of a sacrifice. The Rig-Veda describes man and wife performing equal and self-same functions in the sacrifice. ‘The pair (man and wife) who extract the Soma juice with one mind and mix it with the milk-oblation, O gods, let them receive good food; they remain steady in their determination; their sacrifice sees a successful end; they never are required to conceal their attachment to the gods, and for all that they become famous in the world; they get sons and daughters, lead a healthy life and enjoy it fully to the brim’ (Rig. 8-37-8).

या दंपती समनसा सुनुतः मा च धावतः ।

देवासो नित्याऽऽशिरा ॥ ५ ॥

This was the conception of the ideal relations between man and woman in the Vedic days. Sacrifice was the highest important affair of the Vedic family and in that the woman had

been accorded a dignified and equal position with man. There is no doubt that they were equally regarded in the routine and normal conduct of everyday life. The Rig-Veda in fact considers wife as the very essence of a household. (Rig. 3-54-4). 'It is the wife that makes the home.' Manu while explaining this concept of the Aryas observes clearly: 'Four walls do not make a home; it is the wife that completes it.' The honourable role of women in the Vedic society has been described in the Brihad-Aranyak-Upanishad which survives as a pattern of ideal womanhood even to this day. It was the Vedic conviction that life becomes perfect whole with the joining together of the two complementaries. This can be very well gathered from the exemplary attitude of the Vedic people how they regarded and adored woman as an equal-half in all the functions of life. The Brihad-Aranyak-Upanishad observes:

“ स वै नैव रेमे तस्मात् एकाकी न रमते स द्वितीयमैच्छत् स हैतावानास यथा ज्ञीपुमांसौ संपरिष्वक्तौ स इममेवात्मानं द्वेधा पातयत् ततः पतिश्च पत्नी चाभवताम् तस्मादिदं अर्धवृणुमिव एव इति ह स्माह याज्ञवल्क्यः तस्मादयमाकाशः स्त्रिया पूर्यते एव तां समभवत् ततो मनुष्या जजायन्त । ”

'The Lord could not enjoy by himself all alone. He desired to have a companion to multiply. Man also cannot enjoy himself all alone; he desires to have a partner and finds one; that is indeed what we call man and wife. It is in the meeting of man and woman that life becomes perfect and whole; any one by itself is incomplete; the man's life is made complete by the complementary of a woman; it is she who fills the gap in the life of a man; it is from her that humanity is born.' This very concept has been more clearly expanded in the Vajasaneya Brahman as follows: 'Woman is the other half of man; therefore man's life is incomplete so long as he is not united with a woman; when a man gets his wife, the other half, he begets himself in her in the form of a son and comes to fruition.'

“ अर्धो ह वा एष आत्मनः तस्मात् यत् जायां न विन्दते नैतावत् प्रजायते अर्धो हि तावत् भवति अथ यदैवं जायां विन्दतेऽथ प्रजायते तर्हि सर्वो भवति । ”

कस्य रूपमभूद् द्वेधा यत्कायमभिवक्षते ।

ताभ्यां रूपविभागाभ्यां मिथुनं समपद्यत ॥ ५२ ॥

यस्तु तत्र पुमान् सोऽभूत् मनुः स्वायंभुवः स्वराट् ।

स्त्री याऽऽसीत् शतरूपाख्या महिष्यस्य महात्मनः ॥ ५३ ॥

तदा मिथुनधर्मेण प्रजा द्वेधां बभूविर ।

The very word 'Jaya' in Sanskrit has a meaningful derivation.... connoting this very idea. While elaborating and explaining the theory of evolution of life in the universe, the Bhagawat tells us that while the Brahmadeo or the Creator was engrossed in his 'Samadhi', his body was split into two equal portions. One part was Manu, the man, and the other was 'Shatarupā'—the woman. It was this pair of Manu and Shatarupā that was the first ancestor of the human species. (Bhagawat 3-12).

These quotations give a correct idea about the concept of the Vedic people regarding women and their contribution towards making life perfect and full. Having held woman so equal and worthy in making the life complete, they could not but acknowledge her equal right in the performance of their highest undertaking, namely, the 'sacrifice'. The right to perform the sacrifice was thus given to a woman. She had therefore to undergo initiation also. There is no doubt that in those days of the Vedas, the woman like man had also to go through the sacrament of Upanayan. After the initiation she had to pass some of her time in the study and practice of Brahmacharya. This is evident from such observations in the Atharva-Veda as 'A girl gets a befitting husband by the practice of Brahmacharya.' Of course it is not to be supposed that all the girls followed this practice invariably. The Vedic seers had realised that a woman had her peculiar and distinctive position and function in the society and therefore they had devised a befitting course of conduct for her. Unlike the present times, they did not believe in prescribing the same course of conduct or studies or work for her, which is affecting the feminine virtues as a smothering bane and turning our girls into useless copies of male patterns. What the Vedic seers had foreseen has been long back realised by an Eastern nation like Japan. Signs are there to infer that even the Western people

are also now understanding the folly of their rash course and slowly turning to the conservative but more scientific view of the Eastern people. The Vedic practice allowed full liberty to intending and worthy women to follow their individual inclinations for study or the vow of a life-long celibacy. The reputed names of Ghoshā, Lopāmudrā, Yājñavalki, etc., who had the honour of being included among the Vedic seers are a conclusive proof of the above fact.

Later on in the period of the Smritis for certain reasons this practice of initiating women came to an end, and their function in the performance of the sacrifice became more or less formal. How this change from the functional association to formal decoration came to take place is a matter of curiosity. But there is no doubt that in the Vedic period the conditions were different. Woman in the Vedic days had requisite knowledge of the mantras of common use in the routine life of a Vedic household, and the capacity to perform the prescribed daily obligation. It was the woman who had to perform as a rule the evening sacrifice of the Grihya-Agni and Smarta-Agni.

“ कामं गृह्ये अग्नौ पत्नीः जुहुयात् प्रातर्होमौ ”

If she so desired there was no prohibition for her performing the morning sacrifices also, as is evident from the Grihya Sutras. The Gobhil Grihya Sutra observes: ‘The nightly sacrifice should be performed by the woman but if she so wills it, she may also perform the morning one too.’ (Gobhil . . . 1-3).

The sacrifice known as the ‘Sita-Agni’ to be performed at the harvest season has been enjoined on the women by custom. Numerous evidences can be cited from our historical literature that women performed the sacrifices and that they were conversant with the Vedic mantras. Valmiki describes the occasion when his hero Rama went to the palace of Kausalya for bidding good-bye to her prior to proceeding to the forest. Valmiki tells us: ‘Kausalya was wearing a silk garment. Her face sparkled with the glow of pleasure and complete satisfaction at the thought that her son was going to be soon crowned.

सा क्षौमवसना हृष्टा नित्यं व्रतपरायणा ।

अग्निं जुहोति स्म तदा मंत्रवित् कृतमंगला ॥ १५ ॥

Kausalya who was dedicated to the observation of vows and

prescriptions, and who was well conversant with the mantras had just performed her purificatory rites and was offering oblations in the fire.' (Ramayan Ayodhya 20-15). Ramayan bears testimony also to the fact that womenfolk in those days used to offer the evening prayers. Hanuman did not find Sita anywhere even after an intensive search in the Ashok Forest. Tired he came to the banks of the river with the thought that Sita would not fail to come to the river-side in the evening to offer her prayers to the setting Sun. Hanuman speaks aloud:

संध्याकालमनाः श्यामा ध्रुवमेष्यति जानकी ।

नदीं चेमां शुभजलां संध्यार्थं वरवर्णिनी ॥ ४८

'That graceful lady of Rama will certainly arrive here on the river bank to perform her evening prayers' (Sundar... 45-48). This naturally leads to the conclusion that in those days women also used to be initiated.

Harita, the author of a Smriti going by his name, divides females into two categories and says that some girls were married immediately after their initiations, while others who followed an intensive course of Vedic studies remained celibate. Those who belonged to the second-class, he terms as 'Brahmavadini', meaning devoted to the study of Brahma. Harita further enlightens us on the duties of the second-class as follows: 'The girls dedicated to the study of Brahma, had to follow all the three regulations prescribed for a Brahmachari, viz., performance of sacrifice, study of the Vedas and sustenance by begging the food. The only concession to the female Brahmacharinis was that they were not required to go for the collection of their daily food outside the home; but had to maintain themselves with food begged from their relatives in the home. These female Brahmacharinis were never looked down by the society as it came to pass in mediaeval days or as at the present times. The parents were rather anxious to see their daughters turn out as good Brahmavadinis and therefore they went to the length of offering the oblations of cooked 'sesamum and rice' to their deities and their prayers to that end. The Brihad-Aranyak-Upanishad describes this ritual as follows: 'One who desires that his daughter should become a Brahmavadini and stay like that for the whole life should get

cooked sesamum and rice and offer it as oblations to the Almighty.' (Brihad 6-4-17). A number of such highly accomplished, cultured and learned Brahnavadinis are well-known to have acquired a position of status and honour in the society. We know of such a great Brahnavadini having visited the court of the philosopher King Janak. The story of Maitreyi is too well-known to be repeated here. It is a convincing instance of how women were also well-versed in the lores and philosophies in those days.

Patanjali mentions two words: 'Upādhyāyini and Upādhyāyā'. In his explanation the great grammarian tells us that the first is used when the wife of the preceptor is meant; but the second means the learned lady who does the work of teaching and preaching herself. This throws light on one fact of the Vedic period, namely, that then women also undertook the profession of teaching unlike the later mediaeval times. To become a preceptor one must of course be well-versed in the lores and different branches of knowledge, and women were there in those days who professed to do that. If any doubt is entertained about this fact, it will become clear from another reference from literature. Bhavabhuti mentions in his Uttara Rama Charita that a certain female disciple was changing her place for studies. Later on, however, this fundamental right of women to receive and impart education was lost to them. It will be however noted that preceptors like Badarayan and Jaimini were of the opinion that the women should be entitled to receive knowledge. But the change in the social conditions deprived the women of this right. Certain writers of Social Laws refer to this as a right that was available in a bygone remote age. That however directly confirms women's position and their rights. The Yama Smriti mentions: —

पुराकल्पे तु नारीणां मौजीबन्धनमिष्यते ।

अध्यापनं च वेदानां सावित्रीवचनं तथा ॥

पिता पितृव्यो भ्राता वा नैनामध्यापयेत् परः ।

स्वगृहे चैव कन्यायाः संक्षयचर्या विधीयते ॥

'In the past epoch women were also being accorded initiation by the ritual of Maunji-bandhan. They were taught the

Vedas and they were initiated into the Gayatri Mantra. But then the condition was, only the father, uncle or the elder brother could teach them the Vedas; and nobody else was to do that. So also their sustenance was prescribed by the begging of food only from the precincts of the household.' There should be no difficulty to understand the so many restrictions which were enjoined. That was only to avoid the undesirable consequences. Our fore-fathers permitted their female progeny to receive education and at the same time took care to avoid the bad results.

✓Historians have advanced many a reason for the deprivation of women's right to equality and education and their degradation to the level of the Shudra class. As told before even against the expressed and strong views of the great preceptors like Badarayan and Jaimini to permit women to receive education and initiation, the then social leaders thought of denying the same to them. ✓What were the impelling reasons to do so? Some partisans of women's rights opine that men degraded the women with the only motive to turn them into their bond-slaves. ✓It was the conspiracy of men to deny women the knowledge of Vedas. ✓Some others hold that in the wake of the ingress of the uncivilised races like the Shakas, Hunas, Parthians, etc., in Bharat, their political dominance, their uncivilised ways of life and thoughts, also influenced the Bharatiya mind which changed its viewpoint in regard to women. But this does not seem to be a convincing argument. What Dr. A. S. Altekar of the Banaras Hindu University says in this connection seems to be nearer the truth. He observes: 'These uncivilised dynasties came to rise only in the first century before Christ. And when they did come to possess some power in India, that also was confined only to the Punjab; their domination did not continue long outside the Punjab. On the other hand, ✓the view that women belong to the same category as the Shudras had come to be held much before Patanjali, that is about three centuries before Christ. The present author feels that the real reason why the women came to be degraded to the status of Shudras has to be discovered in the newly started practice of marrying non-Arya women

by the Arya race. ✓ In the Vedic period marriage was common between the three classes. But there are very few, if at all any, instances of marriages between the Aryas and the Dasas, Shudras or the Anaryas. ✓ But with the passage of time this practice came into vogue. The marriages of Bhima and Arjuna with Hidimba and Ulupi respectively belong to this category and period. No very great opposition or resistance was evinced in the first days to such marriages. ✓ But as the undesirable effects of such marriages became visible, the law-givers began to think of the problem and devise means to check them. It is then that they began to prescribe such relations between the Aryas and the Shudras though they permitted what are called 'anuloma' marriages. As it happens everywhere, some people however did not obey the laws and violated the prescriptions of the law-givers. The result was that the non-Arya women entered the houses of the Arya people and naturally that affected the status of the Arya women. The non-Arya women did not know Sanskrit; and if at all they acquired some smattering knowledge, they could not be made eligible for the rights in the performance of sacrifices. Thus was the right to the knowledge of the Vedas as well as that of performing the sacrifice was not shared by the non-Aryan women. That must have brought about a heart-burning and jealousy in the minds of such non-Arya women, who however were more often the dearer to the male Aryas. It might be that some Aryas might have bestowed the favours of choosing the non-Arya women as their associates in the performance of sacrifices. ✓ That however was bound to lead to a chaos in the ritual. ✓ To avoid the chaotic consequences the group of 'Aitishayan' law-givers devised the remedy of depriving all women of the right to the study of Vedas. It was then that the other group of Jaimini and Badarayana opposed this un-Vedic practice. But they did not succeed. ✓ Women used to be married then in their thirteenth or fourteenth years. ✓ That left little time for the girls to complete the Vedic studies after their initiations. This naturally made the Upanayan of girls almost a meaningless and purposeless ritual. The social philosophers saw no use in continuing the practice and began to plead for the abandonment of the same. ✓ That is how opinion grew stronger and

in brief

over-whelming that women should not be initiated, and they should not be taught the Vedas. And slowly the popular view became a custom and law in due time. It will be noticed that Manu is for the initiation of women but does not want the Vedic mantras to be recited by them. That was a period when Upanayan remained only a formal physical ritual without any pristine purpose. Manu was voicing this sentiment when he referred to the Upanayan of women without the right to study the Vedas. As the study of the Vedas became extinct, the Upanayan gradually turned into a purposeless form. As a result the leaders of the society in the third and the fourth century began to think that it was better to put a stop to the farce. That thought is reflected in the law-book of Yajnavalkya. But it is apparent from some other law-books like that of Yama that they were aware of the system of Upanayan of the females in ancient times; yet they recorded their opinion that the system should be abandoned as the same was not very convenient in the changed circumstances. And the opinion went so far as to argue that even Manu was not in favour of the initiation of women as has been attempted by Medhatithi the great commentator on Manu Smriti belonging to the eighth century. Whatever might have been the state of affairs in later periods, there is no doubt that the women were entitled to the ceremony of Upanayan and were eligible for admission to any Vedic school for the study of the Vedas.

With some women thus choosing to lead a life of celibacy and study of Vedas, the general rule and fact was that almost all entered the household and ruled the homes most ably. Woman was looked upon as the cornerstone of the Bharatiya home and family. . . . and in that light only the Rig-Veda commends her position and function in the society. We have already shown at length how mistaken are some of the arguments of persons like Dange who try in vain to persist in proving that there was no marriage as an institution in the Vedic times. If we are to hold that the Rig-Vedic period is the most ancient of the recorded times known to man, then one has no escape but to come to the conclusion that the Vedic institution of marriage was the most developed one and that it was almost in the same perfect shape and form as is found

in the most glorious and golden age of the Bharatiya civilisation. The marital relation between man and wife had come to be evolved as a sacrament and not as a contract convenient for the enjoyment of worldly pleasures and satisfying the needs of brute passions. Marriage was looked upon as a sacred meeting of two souls as a result of the happy and inevitable culmination of the desires and effects of past lives. The grand idea of a woman's life was not to find merely a companion or partner for the happy passage of life in this world but to fulfil itself in the procreation of the progeny and fill the world with the love and affection of a mother. The ideal that sanctified marriage were a blissful life and the fulfilment of the responsibility of a household. Taking of a hand in marriage was the initiation of the couple in the household with all the responsibilities expected of them. The vows which the male uttered at the time of taking the hand of a female as his wife give clear and unambiguous expression to the lofty sentiment of the idea of a perfect family, the concept of the bliss in life, and the consummation of the companionship in its highest sense. The husband at the time of taking the hand of the bride says:—

गृह्णामि ते सौभगऽत्वाय हस्तं मया पत्या जरत्ऽष्टिः यथा भसः ।

भगः अर्यमा सविता पुरंऽधिः मह्यं त्वा अदुः गार्हऽपत्याय देवाः ॥

‘I take this your hand for your complete bliss; may you attend with me, your husband, ripe old age. Remember, that all the deities, the Lord of the Destinies, Aryama, Savita, Purandhi, have entrusted your hand to me with the object that I should practise the duties of a householder.’ (R. 10-85-36).

In another place the Rig-Veda mentions:—

नीलऽलोहितं भवति कृत्वा आसक्तिः वि अज्यते ।

एधन्ते अस्याः ज्ञातयः पतिः बंधेषु बध्यते ॥ २८ ॥

परा देहि शामुल्यं ब्रह्मऽभ्यः वि भज वसु ।

कृत्वा एषा पत्ऽवती भूत्वी मा जाया विशते पतिम् ॥ २९ ॥

अश्रीरा तनूः भवति रुशती पापया अमुया ।

पतिः यत् वध्वः वाससा स्वं अंगं अभिऽभित्सते ॥ ३० ॥

‘Whatever may please you, let that multiply here with your children. May you be always alert in the duties of the household; may you grow ripe with this your husband and live long

to advise in the same way to others. What they call a witch is of blue and red colour; but in fact one who is always full of attachments and passions is such a vicious lady; that tribe multiplies fast and her lord the husband gets trapped into her viles. May you therefore be good to the poor in giving them clothings, and to the learned in offering them wealth; otherwise this greed which turns a woman into a wily wife may ruin her husband. It is also true that when the husband with the greed over-powering his heart tries to cover himself with the cloth of his wife, that is the wealth belonging to her, turns into a lustreless person.'

(R. 10-85-27-30)

In yet another place it is said: 'The Soma first nourished her; then the Gandharvas nursed her; thirdly the Fire protected her, and now the man, her husband will look after her. It is therefore said the Soma entrusted the woman to the Gandharvas, the Gandharvas to the Fire and now the fire has entrusted you to my hands and bestowed prosperity and progeny on us. May you therefore reside here happily; let not anything separate you from your husband; may you enjoy fully the whole of life; and may you reside to the end in this house with your children and grand-children in all health and happiness. May the Lord, giver of progeny, bestow progeny on us; may that patron of the Aryas, Aryama extend our life to ripe old age and keep us in perfect health; may you who are to be bliss-giver to all enter this household of your husband and may you bring happiness to us men and animals. May your kind look pour bliss on us all; and you who are expected to be the life's support of your husband, may you always have a pure mind and brilliant prowess and may you show your affection to all the living animals; may you be a devotee of the God; may you beget only brave and heroic sons; and may you, the auspicious, be of good omen to us human beings and animals. O God Indra, you who fulfil our desires, may you bestow on her good sons and make her full of bliss; may she get ten sons by your grace; so that her husband may become as the eleventh. May you behave in the household in such manner as the father-in-law will feel that you are the queen of the house, the mother-in-law may know

that you are the mistress of the house and your brothers-in-law will take you to be the real proprietress of the house. May all the gods keep us in the best of the conditions; may the Apopervi keep our hearts united; may the wayu that is the breath of the Universe and the Almighty who has created it keep us all well and in order, may the propitious destiny ordain that we shall ever remain together in happiness.' (R. 10-85-40-47).

सोमः प्रथमः विविदे गंधर्वः विविदे उत्तरः ।
 तृतीयः अग्निः ते पतिः तुरीयः ते मनुष्यजाः ॥ ४० ॥
 सोमः ददत् गंधर्वाय गंधर्वः ददत् अग्नये ।
 रयिं च पुत्रान् च अदात् अग्निः मर्त्यं अथो (इति) इमाम् ॥ ४१ ॥
 इह एव स्तम् मा वि यौष्टि विश्वं आयुः वि अश्नुतम् ।
 कीळन्तौ पुत्रैः नप्तृभिः समोदमानौ स्वे गृहे ॥ ४२ ॥
 आ नः प्रजां जनयतु प्रजाऽपतिः आऽजरसाय सं अनक्तु अर्यमा ।
 अदुःसंगलीः पतिऽलोकं आ विश शं नः भव द्विऽपदे शं चतुऽपदे ॥ ४३ ॥
 अघोरऽचक्षुः अपतिऽध्नी एधि शिवा पशुऽभ्यः सुऽमना सुऽवर्चाः ।
 वीरऽसूः देवऽकामा स्योना शं नः भव द्विऽपदे शं चतुऽपदे ॥ ४४ ॥
 इमां त्वं इंद्र मीद्वः सुऽपुत्रां सुऽभगां कृणु ।
 दश अस्यां पुत्रान् आधेहि पतिं एकदशं कुधि ॥ ४५ ॥
 संऽराज्ञी श्वशुरे भव संऽराज्ञी श्वश्र्वां भव ।
 ननांदरि संऽराज्ञी भव संऽराज्ञी अधिदेवृषु ॥ ४६ ॥
 सं अंजन्तु विश्वेदेवाः सं आपः हृदयानि नौ ।
 सं मातारिश्वा सं धाता सं ऊं (इति) देष्टुं दधातु नौ ॥ ४७ ॥

The above passage will make it clear to all those who want to be convinced about the expectations of the Vedic Aryas from the woman, the mistress of the house. When the prayers impress upon the bride who is entering the house first time, how she must win over her relatives in law like father, mother, sisters and brothers of her husband, and by her own conduct create a position of honour and regard in their mind, it is either sheer knavery or foolishness to argue that the Vedic Aryas had not any very refined ideas of the institution of a family and the ideal relation between man and wife. ✓ The Vedic people considered marriage as an opening to an ideal way of family life. They coveted a house full of children and grand-children which could become a harbour of affection till

the end of life in the mortal world. From the dialogue between Yama and Yami, to which we have already referred to before, it becomes evident that the Vedic Aryas must have recognised and followed some prescriptions and prohibitions regarding the degrees in which marriage relations could be contracted.

In the views of the Vedic Aryas when a man and woman were united by the ties of the sacrament of marriage all duality between them disappeared. Unlike the modern times it was not a partnership in which the thought of individuality was kept alive. ✓The woman merged herself completely in the man. Her identification was complete with her husband to the extent that not only the father and mother of her husband became hers, but even the cattle and servants also she had to own and love as her own. On the other hand, she was considered to be dead to the family of birth. ✓It was this highest stage of inseparable identification with the interests of her husband that was expected of a wife in those times. It naturally followed that there was no scope for any thought of licentiousness. Both tried to please each other, but there was never the scent of passion in their enjoyment. ✓The Vedic Aryas were indeed very fond of progeny which they desired for the continuation of the family. The woman considered it to be her prime function to become a mother in which alone she considered her roll to be fulfilled. The Vedic thought while enjoining man and woman to beget children for the continuation of the family at the same time commenced a prescription which should stand out as the finest expression of a noble sentiment which can rarely be met with in the literatures of the world. Having enjoined man and woman to get united by the inseparable bonds of marriage and directing them to beget children for the continuation of the family they have been asked to observe a restraint and recognise a limit beyond which their passion should not drag them. ✓The woman has been asked to look upon her husband and take care of him after she gets ten children for him as her eleventh son. ✓That means that having fulfilled the function and responsibility as a husband the man was advised to observe abstinence and restraint and become as if a child to the woman. Such is the concept of the Vedic Aryas regarding woman whom they did

not consider merely as chattel or an object of sensual enjoyment.

The Vedic Aryas gave utmost value to the virtue of loyalty between man and wife. In this they did not admit any compromise or permit any adulteration. The Vedic father while offering the hand of his daughter to the groom tells her: 'Listen, I am releasing you from here the house of your father; but here I am tying you to the house of your husband, O Indra, Lord of our desires, may you see that this bride remains steadfast and gets children and good fortune.' (R. 10-85-25).

“ प्र इतः सुधामि न अमुतः सुबद्धां अमुतः करम् । यथा इयं इंद्र मीढ्वः सुऽपुत्रा सुऽभगा असति । ”

“ सुमंगलीरेयं वयूः इमां समेत पश्यत । सौभाग्यं अस्यै दत्वाय अथ अस्तं विपरा इतन । ”

The man and the woman are standing facing each other to take each other's hands; the Vedic Brahmins are assembled to bless the union; the priest administers so many oaths and pledges to the couple, explains them their duties: in such an atmosphere when the woman is entering the most significant of the stage of her life, the Sage invites the gathering when he utters his last blessing and says: 'This bride is a fortunate one, come near, look at her, give her all your good wishes and then return to your homes.' (R. 10-85-33).

“ प्रजाभिरग्ने अमृतत्वमश्याम् । ”

If we look at the conventions and symbolism in this ritual and sacrament of marriage as evidence in the Vedic people valued the institution of marriage for the sake of religion, progeny, as well as the joy of life. They did want progeny; but that wanted of a very high and meritorious order to enable them to follow the divine path. The Vedic man always prayed: 'O Agni, may we get the progeny so that we may attain immortality.' (R. 5-4-10). The Vedic woman also held the same ambitions. The aspiration of a Vedic woman could well be illustrated from the following mantra in the Atharva Veda where the woman says: 'Let my sons be so brave and prowessful as to defeat their enemies; may my daughters be brilliant;

may I become successful and let my husband's fame spread everywhere.'

मम पुत्राः शत्रुहणोऽथो मे दुहिता विराट् ।

उताहमस्मि संजया पत्यौ मे श्लोक उत्तमः ॥

“ स्नुषा श्वशुरा लज्जमाना निलीयमाना एति ”

The woman in the Vedic times who always expressed herself in so manful a vigour was however never an amazon and retained all her feminine virtues. The Aitareya Brahman observes: 'The daughter-in-law while she passed by her father-in-law always took care to see that her whole body was well-covered befitting the decorum of a female in a noble family.'

सहृदयं सांमनस्यं अविद्वेषं कृणोमि वः ।

अन्यो अन्यं अभिहृतं वत्सं जातं निवाध्न्या ॥ १ ॥

अनुव्रतः पितुः पुत्रो मात्रा भवतु संमनाः ।

जाया पत्ये मधुमतीं वाचं वदतु शंतिवाम् ॥ २ ॥

मा भ्राता भ्रातरं द्विक्षन् मा स्वसारमुत स्वसा ।

संम्यञ्चा सत्रता भूत्वा वाचं वदत भद्रया ॥ ३ ॥

The Atharva-Veda has given a lucid description of an ideal family: 'I make you devoid of jealousy and rivalry, of a balanced and equitable mind and full of affection towards all. Like the cow that loves all her calves equally, may you behave in perfect affection towards each other. May the son be of the mind as the mother and of the same views as the father; may the wife always converse with her husband in sweet and pleasant manner. Brother should not hate his brother; nor should a sister be envious of her sister; all of them should be of one mind and should be united in soft and good speech and behaviour.' (A. 3-30).

The Vedic women were ideal mistresses of the households; they were also well-versed in the lore and knowledge of the higher principles; they are also seen to be devoted and faithful to their husbands. But besides all this, they were seen to be brave when occasions required. The descriptions of Mudgalani and Vishpala in the Rig-Veda reveal that they were skilled in the handling of arms and weapons, bold in their

conduct and brave in facing the difficult situation to the point of shining in victory even on the battle-fields. It is interesting to read the hymns of Mudgalani and Vishpala from the Rig-Veda as they reveal their exploits on the battle-fields.

Mudgalani was the wife of Mudgala, the son of Bharṇyashva. Mudgala was a well-to-do man with a large herds of cattle, cows and bullocks. Once upon a time some cattle thieves carried away his cows. Mudgala was getting ready to chase the robbers but found that all his bullocks and horses also were carried away by the thieves. He had no animals to yoke to his chariot. There was only one old and infirm bullock left in the cattle-pen. He yoked that animal to his chariot and was thinking of pursuing the thieves. His wife Mudgalani was driving the chariot. The Vedic lady showed such skill in driving the chariot with that old bullock that the Vedic seers were fascinated by her magical skill and bravery. The result was of course Mudgal succeeded in overtaking the cattle-lifters and getting back his cows. This episode is vividly described by the Vedic poet thus:—

‘Mudgalani, the wife of the brave warrior, Mudgal was sitting by his side in the chariot. Her skirt was fluttering with the wind, but the lady did not even look to all that. Mudgalani fired with the spirit to fight for her land and her cattle became a brave charioteer and faced the front and defeated thousands of soldiers arrayed against her. She then came to know that Indra himself had sent his army to assist her. Raising a loud cry she drove the chariot forcibly when the old bullock galloped at random; the dust raised by the hoofs of the bullock enveloped the lady. It was like a lady abandoned by her husband getting him back accidentally, or like the swelled breasts of a lady giving out milk or like a water-bag drawn by water-wheels sprinkling down its water, Mudgalani came in spirit. The wonderful result was that the soldiers were filled with enthusiasm and earnestness for the achievement of their object, under the leadership of the lady Mudgalani. May their victory be as spotlessly bright and auspicious as the lightful moonlight.’ (R. 10. 102-2, 7, 11).

उत् स्म वातः वहति वासः अस्याः अधिऽरथे यत् अजयत् सहस्रम् ।
 रथी अभूत् मुद्रलानी गोऽइष्टौ भरे कृतं वि अचेत् इन्द्रऽसेना ॥ २ ॥
 उत प्रऽधि उत् अहन् अस्य विद्वान् उप अयुनक्त वंसर्गं अत्र शिक्षन् ।
 इन्द्रः उत् आवत् पतिं अध्वन्यानां अरंहत पदाभिः ककुत्स्मान् ॥ ७ ॥
 परिवृक्ताऽइव पतिऽविद्ये आनत् पीप्याना कूचक्रेणऽइव सिचन्
 एषऽएष्या चित् रथ्या जयेम सुऽमंगले सिनऽवत् अस्तु सातम् ॥ ११ ॥

The story of Vishpala is yet more romantic. Vishpala was reputed as a learned woman. She was distinguished both for her bravery and learning which she possessed to a high degree. Vishpala was the queen of a king named Khel. Once the King Khel was involved in a fight when Vishpala joined him in his difficulty. The enemy unfortunately surrounded her and made a terrible attack in which she lost one leg. The heroic lady however did not lose heart. She invoked the Ashvinkumars to help her in her plight. The Divine physicians-twin performed a very miraculous operation and gave her an artificial leg of iron. Next day Vishpala could resume her fight. She vanquished her enemies on the battle-field. There are verses describing this legend of Vishpala in the Rig-Veda. They are: O Ashvins, you who saved the rich Vishpala born in the family of the Atharva with your power which protects the devotees, and you who protected the dynasty of the Ashva family, may you come with all your prowess to us. (R. 1-112-10).

याभिर्विऽपलां धनसां अथर्व्यं सहस्रमीळहे आजौ अजिन्वतम् ।

याभिर्वेशे अश्व्यं प्रेणि आवतं ताभिः ऊ धु कृतिभिः अध्विना गतम् ॥

In another verse it is said: 'Vishpala lost her leg in the battle in the night-time like a bird losing its wing. But you, O Ashvins, gifted her with an iron leg overnight to enable her to get the field next morning.' (R. 1-116-15).

चरित्रं हि वेर् इवाच्छेदि पर्णं आज्ञा खेलस्य परितक्म्यायाम् ।

सद्यो जेषां आयसां विऽपलायै धने हिते सतीवे प्रति अधत्तम् ॥

Side-by-side these brave and learned women, we find equally great devotees in the Rig-Vedic times. The anecdote of Apala is very interesting from this point of view. Apala was a great

devotee of Indra. This Apala had prepared the offering of Soma juice, ground with her own teeth. Indra who was extremely pleased with the devotion of Apala had partaken of the juice with great sentiment of love and feelings.

Thus the Vedic literature bears testimony to the existence of women in the nation who were highly cultured, learned, extremely devoted and heroic like warriors. The patterns which the Vedic nation has left behind as legacies have been able to inspire the ideals of Indian womanhood in later times right up to the present days. From what we have perceived about the under-currents of the life of the Vedic nation, it will be apparent that the basis of the moral outlook and the conventions of social life of the Vedic people must have been some fundamental and inviolable principles which could be called spiritual in contradistinction of the materialistic or pragmatic. And then the question that naturally arises is whether the spiritual insight of the Vedic nation had reached such a high stage of evolution and perfection as is claimed. This is indeed a vexed question of modern times. Even orientalists like Shri Ranade also seem to be perplexed over it. Only Tilak out of all the modern research scholars is positive and categorical on the point. Let us therefore now turn to that aspect of the Vedic literature which will give us correct glimpses of the spiritual outlook of the Vedic nation.

CHAPTER XII

THE SPIRITUAL SOUL OF THE VEDIC NATION

FROM the foregoing discussion it must have become evident that the society which we come across in the Vedas must have been one such as had determined and realised the ultimate truths about social problems and philosophical fundamentals, the values of life, the significance of character and its proper cultivation, etc., etc. There is something infinite and unknowable beyond what is perceptible as the physical universe and beyond the fact of our existence in it; that death only screens our mortal life in this physical world, and does not destroy it totally; and that the soul which abandons one mortal frame, travels and continues in some other form; these and such similar and unique convictions to have come to be ingrained in the natural thought of the nation seems to be far from conceivable without a prior evolution like the one which we find in the Vedic society. A code of ethics, an ideal and inviolable pattern for religious and social conduct, and convictions about the efficacy of merit and sin, can never arise in a society devoid of a spiritual outlook or become unshakable without its deep-laid foundation. When we bring to our mind how firmly all these spiritual concepts were deeply embedded in the Vedic society, we begin to wonder. In any society the pattern of its ideal behaviour reflects in its philosophy of life and its approach to the surrounding universe. Unbroken traditions which a society follows indicate the perfect or imperfect ideas of its philosophy and attitude to life. The Vedic thinkers evolved a science of cultivation of individual character and social behaviours through prescriptions of specific rituals and obligations. This they could not have thought of unless they believed in the theory that life persists hereafter in some other form and that it can be influenced by actions done in this world. What was the concept of these Vedic people about the soul and the spiritual contents of it? We will try to have a passing survey of the Vedic concepts as compared with the later theories at the peak of alleged perfection of Bharatiya metaphysics.

The critic of pure reason when he begins to think of the universe and its relation with the soul, he enters the field of philosophy and arrives at some postulates according to his talents. It is in this intensive quest for the knowledge of the reality behind these vexed problems that all philosophy begins. What is that for which a man lives? What is the motive which makes him move in this world? This fundamental question has been disturbing the mind of man ever since he began to think. The question cannot be resolved without first determining what is this 'I', what is its nature, its characteristics, and its relations with the outside universe. The desire to know and the ever questioning reason have raised the eternal riddles about the universe and the Soul in it.

From the first breath a living being comes in contact with the surrounding universe through what are called the five organs. In this contact or the conflict between the living being and the universe the more significant and searching question that disturbs the reasoning mind is the self. The first knowledge which our invariable experience brings to us is that the universe and all that exists in it are the objects of enjoyment while the self is the subject which enjoys them. It soon becomes apparent that all the objects of enjoyment are material and physical in contrast with the subject, the enjoyer, who is sentient and conscious. One begins to feel that the very existence and motion of the material and physical universe is for the benefit of the sentient which always profits by it. This beneficiary sentient is the 'Ego'—the 'I'. It is therefore reasonable that all search and thought should begin with the 'Ego'. For this very reason the Bharatiya philosophers have accorded this Ego the prime consideration and the first place as the beginning of all thought, actions and motions in this world. The human body which contains this 'Ego' or through which the 'Ego' manifests itself, is in a way a representation of the whole universe on account of its having inherited, in whatsoever small measure it may be, all the qualities and the characteristics of the great universe. It is therefore inescapable that in the quest for knowledge about the universe this little human body should become a decisive key factor. The Bharatiya philosophers therefore rightly rely upon all the theories

which they had arrived at in their penetrating inquiry about the living human body, in their attempt to solve the riddle of the creation of this universe. This particular branch of knowledge is called by them by the name 'Pinda-Vichar' (meaning the knowledge of the living human organism) as it relates to the living organism. They conclude that 'what is in an organism is also in the cosmos'.

Human organism is very much like a machine in which all the various functions are taking place ceaselessly. In this human organism known as the body, there are a number of instruments to know and correctly apprise the external objects surrounding the body. These are called the organs of senses which are five in number. The perception of the objects in the outer world differentiated by the five qualities, namely, sound, touch, sight, taste and smell which together make in fact all the sum-total of our knowledge about the universe is gathered by means of these organs of senses. Side by side with these five instruments of knowledge there are five agents of action to enable the organism to function in perfect response, viz., the ears, skin, eyes, tongue and nose. The hands, feet, speech, arms and the organ of generation, are called the organs of action which keep the body ever functioning and in perfect trim. These ten, the five senses and the five organs are together called as the combination of organs. The agents of action only look to the functioning of the body whereas the organs of senses help it to gather knowledge and impressions about the external objects surrounding the body. These are merely gatherers of knowledge which must be channelised and arranged to be useful for which function there is one other instrument which is called the 'Antahkaran' (literally the inside—internal-central—instrument). The gathering of knowledge by individual organs unless it is pulled together will be useless without any determination whether it is good and beneficial or otherwise to the enjoyer—'I'. For this very defined and significant purpose of channelising the knowledge collected by individual organs and then arranging it in order to be useful, this eleventh instrument is set apart but inside the whole organism. This instrument is called 'Man'—mind, and 'Buddhi'—intelligence according to the dual function which

it performs. When it is engaged in the first function of harvesting knowledge through the organs of senses it is called 'Man'; when it becomes occupied in the analysing, sifting, sorting, ordering and determining the knowledge thus gathered, it is called the 'Buddhi'—intelligence. Thus there are five organs of sense, five of action, the eleventh 'Antahkaran', called 'Man'—mind or 'Buddhi'—the intelligence. Besides these there is a twelfth one in the human organism which is termed as the breath or the life which keeps the human body ceaselessly pulsating or as what is called 'alive'. When this breath or pulsation stops, the whole organism becomes dead and functionless. That is why it is called 'Chetana' in the Bhagwat Gita and is counted as a *sine qua non* for the organism to be reckoned as such. It is this 'Chetana' which is a condition precedent for all consciousness and knowledge of the subjective self and the objective universe. It is the consciousness that inspires a distinct sense of self. That sense of self is termed as Ego. All the constituents which go to make the body complex are known as 'Prakriti'; and that which holds them all together and goads them to act or sustains them is called 'Dhriti'. These are all the ingredients or constituents which go to make a whole organism. All of these can become the subject of personal experience and knowledge. This is the sum-total in general of the thought about the human organism as determined by the Bhagwat Gita. The Gita is rightly judged to be the essence of the philosophy of the Upanishads expressed in perfect and flawless terms. The Gita calls this human organism by the significant term 'Kshetra' (field) otherwise known as the 'Pinda'. This complex theory has been unambiguously explained by the Gita in two verses of its thirteenth chapter.

The Bharatiya philosophers however did not stop at the knowledge of the organism or the 'Kshetra', like the physicists who only concentrate upon the physical world. The modern materialists who follow the footsteps of the physicists, refuse to inquire beyond this physical universe. It is indeed a happy sign that of late these scientists and materialists are slowly getting inclined to look beyond the objective world.

A thorough inquiry and understanding of the nature and structure of this human organism poses a difficult problem.

Who is the owner or master of the 'Kshetra' or the field? For whom indeed all these bells toll, the organs of sense gather knowledge, the organs of action function and move according to the dictates of the mind and the intelligence? For whom indeed the breath draws in and out to keep the organism pulsating? Who is that who controls and rules over this combine of so various constituents and ingredients making it into a complex and complete whole which he proudly and egotistically claims as his? If one could know that master of the 'Kshetra' who must be indeed distinct and different from the 'Kshetra' the whole riddle could be resolved. Man could then be said to have known the most hidden secret of life which is considered to be unknowable. There is no doubt that it is not the 'Kshetra' as a whole or any one of the thirty-one constituents that matter so much as that unknown master. There is no doubt that it is these various constituents which perform the functions assigned to them. It is indeed their inherent nature to function, but they do not do so of their sweet will, but at the instance, specific direction, and mandate of someone beyond them. Who is the recipient of joys and pains resulting from the functions of these constituents? Is it not in the experience of everyone that there is something beyond the Kshetra which desires and directs the organs to do something to achieve one thing or avoid the other? It is also a common experience that after that life's breath has stopped, which event we call death, the Kshetra, the combine of the organs of sense and actions, though intact a moment before the passing off of the breath, becomes stiff and motionless and senseless. Is it not a conclusive proof to affirm that there was something in the organism which was dictating it to function and as soon as it departs the organism, the Kshetra becomes functionless and forlorn? It is an incontestable experience that though the organs inherit a capacity to act they have no volition of their own and therefore are called merely the agents of someone else, the Master, who is completely different and independent of them.

This distinction between the 'Kshetra' and the Master 'Kshetrajna' can be explained in another way. It is common experience that the human body is always undergoing develop-

ment and change. The body changes in the three stages of childhood, youth and old age and yet there is someone persisting through all these changes, who claims the body as his own. This imperceptible ego never disclaims the body because it has changed its form. Then that must be without doubt the real master of the body.

This can be also proved by a yet more scientific illustration. It is a scientific fact, now a matter of common knowledge, that every individual atom or particle in the material of which the human body is composed, wears out, changes and is replaced by an altogether new atom. But behind all these changing atoms and particles of the organism, there is someone that does not change and remains one and constant. It is definite that this something is not the breath, for while a human being is asleep, the function of the breath and the whole organism goes on; but there is no consciousness of the self. It is futile and unscientific to deny the existence of this someone beyond the 'Kshetra' or the organism, who indeed controls the very life's breath and the functions of the body and enjoys the objective universe.

This master of the 'Kshetra' cannot be perceived by the organs of senses, nor could it be made a subject of laboratory experiment. That only means that the senses are the organs of his knowledge, they are his instruments. How can the instruments of knowledge know the knower who employs them? He is indeed beyond their ken of perception. To know him these instruments or senses are worthless, futile and inefficacious. The Brihad Aranyak Upanishad warns: 'O mad fellow, how and with what means you expect to know the Knower?'

This element which pervades the organism, which directs and controls it, is called the 'Kshetrajna' the Knower or Master of the Field, in the Bhagwat Gita. Knowledge of this 'master of the Kshetra' is indispensable. For it is for this Master of the 'Kshetra' that the whole organism as well the universe is meant. It is for the joy of this Master that the creation manifests itself in its various aspects. This is being slowly realised by the modern physicists. Will Durand, that intelligent interpreter of the Oriental thought to the Western World, observes

in his memorable volume, 'The Mansions of Philosophy': 'It was the energy of living substance that specialised and moulded organs, nerves, and brains. Now we can think because we have brains, but once life made the brain by trying to think. It is this desire which creates organ after organ and slowly moulds the body in the image of the will.'

The Master does not enter the organism by accident; but it is the organism that has been made to the order and will of the Master. If this concept is thoroughly understood, we shall be able to assess the all important value and significance of the Master of the organism. This Master is according to our Bharatiya thought the Ultimate element the 'Para Brahma'. But before we enter into that aspect of the ultimate element, let us first inquire about and try to acquaint ourselves with the soul which is the first step in this search. The Bhagwat Gita asserts that the knowledge of the everchanging organism, and of that unchangeable by whose will and direction the organism functions is the real knowledge, all else is secondary if not illusive. (Gita 13-1-2).

इदं शरीरं कौन्तेय क्षेत्रमित्यभिधीयते ।

एतद्यो वेत्ति तं प्राहुः क्षेत्रज्ञ इति तद्विदः ॥

क्षेत्रज्ञं चापि मां विद्धि सर्वक्षेत्रेषु भारत ।

क्षेत्रक्षेत्रज्ञयोर्ज्ञानं यत्तज्ज्ञानं मतं मम ॥

अनंदा नाम ते लोका अन्वेन तमसाऽवृताः ।

तांस्ते प्रेत्याभिगच्छंत्यविद्वांसोऽबुधो जनाः ॥

असुर्या नाम ते लोका अन्वेन तमसाऽवृताः ।

तांस्ते प्रेत्याभिगच्छन्ति ये के चात्मह्नो जनाः ॥

अंधं तमः प्रविशन्ति येऽविद्यामुपासते ॥

पीतोदका जग्धतृणा दुग्धदोहा निरिन्द्रियाः ।

अनन्दा नाम ते लोकास्तान्स गच्छति ता ददत् ।

यदा वै पुरुषोऽस्मान्नोकात्प्रेति स वायुमागच्छति तस्मै स तत्र विजिहीते
यथा रथचक्रस्य खं स तेन स ऊर्ध्वं आक्रमते स आदित्यमागच्छति तस्मै स तत्र विजिहीते
यथा लम्बरस्य खं तेन स ऊर्ध्वं आक्रमते स चन्द्रमसमागच्छति तस्मै स तत्र विजिहीते

यथा दुन्दुभेः खं तेन ऊर्ध्वं आक्रमते स लोकमागच्छत्यशोकमहिमं तस्मिन्वसति शाश्वतीः
समाः ॥ (छां. ४. २५. ५-६)

अथ यदि चैवास्मिञ्छव्यं कुर्वन्ति यदि च न अर्चिषमेवासि संभवन्ति, अर्चिषोरहः, अन्ह आपूर्यमाणपक्षं, आपूर्यमाणपक्षायान् षडुदङ्गति मासांस्तान्, मासेभ्यः संवत्सरं संवत्सरादादित्यं, आदित्याच्चन्द्रमसं, चन्द्रमसो विद्युतं तत्पुरुषोऽमानवः । स एनान् ब्रह्म गमयत्येष देवपथो ब्रह्मपथ एतेन प्रतिपद्यमाना इमं मानवमावर्त नावर्तन्ते नावर्तन्ते ।

ये वै के चास्माल्लोकात् प्रयन्ति चन्द्रमसमेव ते सर्वे गच्छन्ति ... एतद्वै स्वर्गस्य द्वारं यच्चन्द्रमाः तं यत्प्रत्याह तमतिस्जृजते य एनं प्रत्याह तमिह वृष्टिर्भूत्वा वषेति, स इह कीटो वा पतंगो वा मत्स्यो वा शकुनिर्वा शार्दूलो वा सिंहो वा परश्वान् वा पुरुषो वाऽन्यो वैतेषु स्थानेषु प्रत्याजायते यथाकर्म यथाविद्यम् । (कौ. १-२)

The Bhagwat Gita is the epitome and crown of the Upanishadic philosophy. It has to be admitted that the Gita propounds in the most scientific style, and lucid diction, perfect exposition of the philosophy that had come to be evolved by that time. This analysis and determination of the two elements which are the basis of all philosophy can be shown to stand any test of modern sciences. We have already cited the views of Will Durand in this regard. Now we quote one passage from the Chandogya Upanishad which explains how the powers of the mind and the 'Chitta' which may be termed as 'psyche' excel everything else and how from it flow the will and desires which are the *causa causans* of all that is objective.

'The psyche (Chitta) is superior than the will; for it is after a thought awakens the Chitta that the will arises. The Chitta is therefore the centre of everything; all things are reflections of Chitta and subsist on it. We come across a man who is reputed to be omniscient; but if he does not apply his mind and think, then people say he knows nothing. On the contrary, people like to listen to one who though he may be modest in knowledge yet applies his mind and thinks. Chitta is therefore the central source of all, the very soul of everything; correctly speaking, the prop of all things. It is therefore right to attend on the Chitta; one who meditates upon it with the

faith that it is the ultimate secret really conquers everything over which Chitta holds sway.' (Chandogya 7-5-1).

चित्तं वाव संकल्पाद् भूयो यदा वै चेतयतेऽथ संकल्पयते ... तस्माद्यद्यपि बहुविदचित्तो भवति नायमस्तीत्येवैनमाहुः ... अथ यद्यल्पविचित्तवान् भवति तस्मा एवोत शुश्रूषन्ते । चित्तं ह्येवैषामेकाग्र्यं, चित्तमात्मा, चित्तं प्रतिष्ठा, चित्तमुपास्तेति ।

This is not a solitary or fluke thought expressed in one Upanishad. The Maitrayani Upanishad also endorses the same view. It says:—

मनसा ह्येव पश्यति मनसा शृणोति, कामः संकल्पो विचिकित्सा भ्रद्धाऽ-
भ्रद्धा, धृतिरधृतिर्हरिर्धौर्भारित्येतत्सर्वं मन एव ।

'It is the mind by which man sees and hears. Desire, will, thought, faith, disbelief, determination, doubt, hesitation, intelligence, and fear are all the reflections of the mind.' (Maitrayani 6-30).

And the Aitareya Upanishad expresses the same view as follows:—

संज्ञानं अज्ञानं विज्ञानं प्रज्ञानं मेधा दृष्टिः धृतिः मतिः मनीषा जूतिः स्मृतिः
संकल्पः ऋतुः असुः कामः वशः इति सर्वाण्येवैतानि प्रज्ञानस्य नामधेयानि भवन्ति ।

'Knowledge and ignorance, special knowledge and superior knowledge, intelligence, perception, determination, opinion, aspiration, will, talent, breath, desire to live, passion and self-control are all different aspects of the same mind.' (A. 3-2). In so brave an expression the philosopher has summarised varied mental feelings which one experiences at different stages.

Now let us turn to the descriptions of the self, the ego or the soul, the 'Kshetrajna', as has been perceived and presented by the Upanishadic philosophers. The treatment of the soul and the penetrating thought bestowed on it by the Upanishadic philosophers is indeed the very essence of all the Bharatiya philosophy. The philosophers have as if taken out the very cream of thoughts churned through centuries and presented it in words so easy and understandable for common intelligence. The distinction of the Upanishadic philosophers is that whereas the materialist thinkers stopped their search at the end of the perceptible physical universe, these thinkers crossed the barriers of physical matter and discarded the organs of senses

as means, and dived deep into the imperceptible to fathom the secrets behind the objective universe and the subjective ego.

Modern psychologists are tending slowly to admit and argue that the ego which becomes a subject of anybody's common experience as long as life breathes, can persist even after the stiffening of the mortal coil as a result of the passing away of the last breath. They are veering round to the theory that when a human being passes away with someone of his ardent desires unfulfilled then that desire which remains attached to the ego perseveres with it even after the abandonment of the physical frame. The Upanishadic philosophers have more convincingly and directly expressed this phenomenon in the terms of the immortality of the soul. In this theory of the self-same persisting soul assuming different forms, by entering varied physical frames, lies the excellence and the genius of the Bharatiya philosophers. The Maitrayani Upanishad describes the soul as follows:—

‘In bygone times there was a sage by name Valkhilya. Once he went to the Creator Prajapati and asked him, ‘O Master, this our human body is like a vehicle. Who is the driver of this vehicle—the human body? Do you know, tell me, if you know it, please!’ On this strange question the Prajapati replied: ‘The charioteer of this vehicle, the human body, is called the “Atma”—the soul. This Atma is ever pure, serene, eternal, unborn that is without any beginning and absolutely free. Unfathomable is its significance. He is the cause of all life and consciousness in this human body which is really devoid of consciousness. That one indeed is the prompter or driver of this body.’ (Maitrayani 2-3-4).

“अथ अपहृतपाप्मानस्तिग्मतेजस ऊर्ध्वरेतसो बालखिल्या इति श्रूयन्ते ।
अथ एते प्रजापतिमब्रुवन् । भगवन् शकटमिवाचेतनमिदं शरीरं ... प्रचोदयिता वा
अस्य यद् भगवान् वेत्ति तदस्माकं ब्रूहीति । तान् होवाचेति । यो ह खलु एव शुद्धं ...
शान्तः ... शाश्वतोऽजस्वतंत्रः स्वे महिम्नि तिष्ठति अनेनेदं शरीरं चेतनवत् प्रतिष्ठापितम् ।
प्रचोदयिता चैषोऽस्येति ।”

The Kaushataki Upanishad explains the same view with different analogies. It says: ‘A razor when put into its sheathe fills it; or the fire when it is kindled in the hearth, fills the

whole of the hearth. So also this "Atma" the soul pervades the whole body from the tips of nails to the ends of hair. Relatives of a rich patron all depend upon him, so too the organs depend upon the "Atma". The rich man dines with his relatives; and they subsist on his food, so also the "Atma" or the soul enjoys in the company of the organs which also subsist on his patronage.' (Kaushataki 4-20).

तद्यथा क्षुरः क्षुरध्याने हितः, विश्वंभरो वा विश्वंभरकुलाय एवमेवैष प्राज्ञ आत्मेदं शरीरमनुप्रविष्ट आ लोमभ्य आ नखेभ्यः । तमेतमात्मानं एतं आत्मनोऽन्व-
वस्यति यथा श्रेष्ठिनं स्वास्तयथा श्रेष्ठैः स्वैर्भुङ्क्ते यथा वा श्रेष्ठिनं स्वा भुञ्जन्त, एवमेवैष
प्राज्ञ आत्मा एतैरात्मभिर्भुङ्क्ते एवमेवैतं आत्मानं भुञ्जति ।

The latter analogy points to the truth that the 'Atma' pervades the whole body. The 'Atma' is smaller than an atom and bigger than the biggest of the imaginable postulates. The Upanishads say that this 'Atma' resides in the innermost heart, and is the real master of the organs and organism called the body. The Chandogya Upanishad beautifully presents this idea as follows: 'This Atma which is seated inside the heart is smaller than a grain of rice, barley, nay even smaller than a seed of mustard, or rather than that smaller than the minutest seed of "shamak" (a kind of very small corn); but the same "Atma" which is contained in the heart is larger than this earth, more expansive than the space above, bigger than the shining sky, nay, nay, larger than the whole universe.'

(Chandogya 3-14-3)

अंगुष्ठमात्रः पुरुषो मध्य आत्मनि तिष्ठति । ईशानो भूतभव्यस्य न ततो
विजुगुप्सते ॥

अणोरणीयान् महतो महीयानात्मास्य जंतोर्निहितो गुहायाम् ।

एष म आत्माऽन्तर्हृदयेऽणीयान् ब्रीहेर्वा यवाद्वा सर्षपाद्वा श्यामाकाद्वा
श्यामाकतण्डुलाद्वा, एष म आत्माऽन्तर्हृदये ज्यायान् पृथिव्या ज्यायानन्तरिक्षाज्यायान्
दिवो ज्यायानेभ्यो लोकेभ्यः ।

Aristotle, one of the Greek philosophers, has like our thinkers held that the 'Atma' or the soul resides in the heart. His reasons for this opinion are, however, very funny and most unscientific. According to him a man dies when his heart is

attacked by disease; it is the heart that is moved by fear, sorrow and joy, and thirdly because the heart is the first organ to be formed in the embryo. For these reasons Aristotle holds that the soul resides in the heart. And from this some people try to show the similarity in the thoughts of Aristotle and our Upanishadic thinkers. They are however grossly mistaken. From the reasons which Aristotle has adduced to prove that the soul resides in the heart, it is obvious that by heart he means the physical heart. In the terminology of the Upanishads the word heart is used to denote a place very much near the brain. The Taittiriya Upanishad calls the 'Atma' residing in the 'Hridaya' as the 'Manomaya Purush'. The Brahman that resides in the brain is termed as the 'lord of the mind'. Thus when we use the word 'Hridaya', we do not mean the fleshy and flabby heart but the place near the brain. Naturally there is a difference in the views of the Greek philosopher and the Upanishadic sages. Now it has been determined that the seat of all knowledge and the source of thought is not the heart but the brain. Thus we see how deep and true to science were the fundamental thinking and theories of the Bharatiya philosophers in contrast to those of the Greek including even Aristotle whose concepts were broad and incorrect, whose theories were superficial, inexact and unscientific. The Upanishads invariably affirm that this 'Kshetrajna', the soul, is tied to the course of rebirths. The rebirth of the soul follows the incidence of the actions in the previous lives. It is the action in one life which involves the soul into a consequent rebirth and retirement from the body. The cycle of appearance and disappearance, birth and death in common parlance, depends upon the quantum and quality of actions good or bad. This is in other words called 'the movement of life', a 'constant and ceaseless flow of the element'. The idea has been inimitably expressed by the Upanishads as follows:—

A sage says: 'This journey out of the world is not an uncommon thing which has come to my lot. I may be proceeding ahead of many others to the other world; but it should not be forgotten that I am accompanying so many others also. What can the Yama, the Lord, who designs death, do to me? When I look to the ancestors who have already retired to the

other world, and also the descendants who have appeared in this world, I am convinced that a human being disappears like a blade of grass when it decays, and rises again afresh like another blade of grass.' (Kath. 1-1-5-6).

बहूनामेमि प्रथमो बहूनामेमि मध्यमः ।

किं स्विद्यमस्य कर्तव्यं यन्मयाद्य करिष्यति ॥

अनुपश्य यथा पूर्वं प्रतिपश्य तथापरे ।

सस्यमिव मर्त्यः पच्यते सस्यमिवाजायते पुनः ॥

The Brihad Aranyak Upanishad elaborates:—

'When a king makes his appearance, all his ministers, menials, and the mayors announce "the king has come, the king has appeared" and rush to look to his conveniences and comforts. Exactly similarly when the "Atma", the soul is born, the elements are awakened and shout the "Brahma has come, the Brahma has come" and begin to dance attendance on him. When the king makes his exit, the officers gather together round him; so also when the soul prepares to leave the mortal frame, all the "pranas", the elements, cluster round about him.'

“तद्यथा राजानमायांतमुग्राः प्रत्येनसः सूतग्रामभ्योऽन्नैः पानैरावसचैः
प्रतिकल्पंतेऽयमावालयमागच्छतीत्येवं हैवंबिदं सर्वाणि भूतानि प्रतिकल्प्यंत इदं ब्रह्माया-
त्तीदमागच्छतीति । तद्यथा राजानं प्रयियासंतमुग्राः प्रत्येनसः सूतग्रामभ्योऽभिसमायन्त्येव-
मेवेममात्मानमंतकाले सर्वे प्राणा अभिसमायन्ति ।

(Brihad 4-3-37-38)

In another mantra the Brihad Aranyak describes:

'When the time of renunciation of the physical frame appears near, the "pranas" assemble round the soul, which gathers all its powers and strength and takes harbour in the "hridaya". When the light in the eyes disappears, the eyes see nothing, as the light looks to its inner self unmindful of the outer world, when people remark: "the soul has lost recognition". The soul which has wound up all its functions and retired into its own cell, it stops talking, it refuses to hear, and does not think. At that time the "hridaya" burns bright with its lustre, and in that light, the soul makes his exit out of the body either through the gates of eyes, head, or any other organ. With the exit of the "Atma", the chief of the "prana"

escapes, and following him the other "pranas" also fly away; only the knowledge, the actions and the memory accompany the departed soul.' (Brihad 4-4-1-2).

स यत्रायमात्माऽऽबल्यं न्येत्यसंमोहमिव न्येत्येयैनमेते प्राणा अभिसमायन्ति, स एतास्तेजोमात्राः समभ्याददानो हृदयमेवान्ववक्रामति, स यत्रैष चाक्षुषाः पुरुषः पराह पर्वतवर्ततेऽथारूपज्ञो भवति । एकीभवति न पश्यतीत्याहु ... एकीभवति न विजानातीत्याहुस्तस्य हैतस्य हृदयस्याग्रं प्रद्योतते तेन प्रद्योतेनैष आत्मा निष्क्रामति चक्षुष्टो वा मूर्ध्नो वान्येभ्यो वा शरीरदेशेभ्यः, तमुत्क्रामन्तं प्राणोऽनूत्क्रामति प्राणमनूत्क्रामन्तं सर्वे प्राणा अनूत्क्रामन्ति तं विद्याकर्मणी समन्वारमेते पूर्वप्रज्ञा च ।

In another high-soaring flight of imagination the great teacher of the Brihad Aranyak Upanishad expounds the phenomenon:—

'A grasshopper when it climbs to the tip of a blade of grass, looks around, selects another blade, and jumps on it. The "Atma" or the human soul after it has come to end of its life in one frame, selects another, and enters into it. A goldsmith takes a piece of gold and gives it a shape of fine ornament; so also this "Atma" after it has washed off the dirt of ignorance and discarded the worn-out frame, assumes a new form which is far more beautiful and enchanting. The new frame or form may be of the manes, the Gandharvas, the celestial beings, of the Prajapati, or of Brahma himself or of some other being. This Atma, the soul, is required to take the rebirth following the consequences of his own actions. One who has performed good actions gets a good rebirth; and the sinner falls into a more sinning life. Merit and sin are the results of the actions of man. They may grow or decrease, but the soul persists in all the stages and births. Desires beget the suiting determination; and determination produces consequent actions. Actions are bound to have their fruits whether good or bad. As one sows, so will he reap.' (B. 4-4-3-5).

The Upanishads contain very clear descriptions of the fruits in which the actions ripen and result. We get in them the mentions of the 'heaven and hell' or the 'divine world and the lower destination'.

'The places to which the ignorant and the unwise go are all dark and hapless.' (Brihad.4.4.11).

'Those who have ruined themselves, they enter into spheres which are all clouded with blinding darkness without any sunshine.' (Isha.3).

'When a soul discards this world, it first passes to the sphere of the winds; there the wind bores a whole as big as the chariot wheel for it to pass through; the soul then reaches the Solar sphere when the Sun gives a passage to the soul through which it makes its way to the Lunar sphere. From the Lunar sphere through another passage the soul crosses to a world which is devoid of any sorrow or joy, where there is no wind or snow and there it resides for ever.'

'Those who reside in solitary silence in the forests and practise penance with devotion and faith, their soul goes by the path of the Sun, above and above, whether their descendants offer them post-death rituals or not. The soul goes first from the Sun to the day, from the day to the brighter half, from the brighter half to the six months of the Uttarayan, from those six months to the Ayan, from Ayan to the Sun, from the Sun to the Moon, and from the Moon to the lightning. There one divine being carries the soul to the Brahma. This is called the path of the gods, or the Brahma way. Those who take to this path have never to repeat the cycle of life and death....' (Chandogya 4-15-5-5).

'Those who leave this world proceed to the Moon; for the Moon is the gateway to the heaven. If destined to return to this world, they come back with the showers, and according to their knowledge and actions are born in different species like germs, kites, fish, tigers, lions or human beings.' (Kaushataki 1-2).

The sum and substance of this whole Upanishadic thought is that the individual soul is immortal. As and when a being realises the true nature of the 'Atma', that moment he becomes free from all the vortex of births and deaths. That is the highest achievement to be coveted. Almost all the Upanishads fix the attention of a 'mumukshu', one who is endeavouring to realise perfect knowledge and total freedom, on the nature and truth of the 'Atma'. The Brihad Aranyak says: 'Search out this "Atma"; meditate upon it; know it to the last and most

significant thing... etc.' Realisation of the self, the soul, is the most difficult and yet the most essential task in life. This 'Atma' is in fact free of all the bonds and consequences of the actions of men, unconcerned with their merits and blemishes. That 'Atma' has to be found out. The 'Atma' does not depend upon the mortal frame, it can persist even without it and is not destroyed with it. The 'Atma' is all pervading and immortal, indestructible, and when one comes to realise his identity with that self, then one becomes brave beyond limits, goes beyond the sense of sorrow and joy. This 'Atma' is then beyond the 'pran' and the 'man' totally detached, absolutely independent from all things material.

The theories about the soul and the body, the 'Atma' and the 'Sharir', or as the terminology calls the 'Kshetrajna' and the 'Kshetra' had been perfected by the time of the Upanishads. From there the philosophy spread down to other times and places. As has been said before, the Gita, the Brahma Sutras and other philosophical treatises are but crystallised epitomes of the definite but a bit disarranged thoughts, scattered over the whole field of the Upanishadic literature. With so varied and abundant expressions giving clues to the theories and truths discovered by the thinkers in the Upanishadic times, it is not only illogical but uncharitable to allege that the Upanishadic philosophers had no definite thoughts on the problems of life and death, the soul and the Universe.

Now some scholars opine that these philosophical treatises belong to a period which is much posterior to the Vedic, in the latter of which, the people had yet not risen above their primitive nature-worship, or discarded their faith in purely physical joys; and hence according to them they cannot be taken to be the adequate illustrations of their thoughts, i.e., of the Vedic people. It becomes therefore necessary to turn to the Vedas proper to satisfy these critics about the views of the Vedic people. In the Rig-Veda itself, one gets the glimpses of these thoughts of the 'Kshetra and Kshetrajna', having attained the stage of perfection. It can be shown that so many concepts of the later Upanishadic philosophy were actually

copied from the Vedic texts. For those who have not looked, into or ignored these passages, we present them here:

There are sixteen hymns in the Rig-Veda which can be considered as exclusively dealing with the metaphysical discussion about the 'Atma'. The thoughts are of course scattered over in a number of prayers and mantras all over the literature. If we can scan all these we gather the following fundamental theories which were almost commonly expressed by the Vedic sages and therefore must be presumed to have been universally recognised. The body is made of five elements; the "Atma" is independent of the physical body; the "Atma" travels round in various births through various forms according to the merits of his actions; the body composed of the five elements dissolves into them at the disappearance of the "Atma"; the "Atma" is not a matter to be born and dead, is beginningless and has no end.' These are the common ideas which were expressed by the Vedic metaphysicians in following words:—

मा एनं अग्ने वि दहः मा अभि शोचः मा अस्य त्वयं चिक्षिपः मा शरीरम् ।

'O Agni, do not scorch out this our relative; do not add to his agonies; do not tear out his skin or the body;

यदा श्रुतम् कृणवः जातऽवेदः अथ ई एनम् हिणुतात् पितृऽभ्यः ॥

श्रुतं यदा करसि जातऽवेदः अथ ई एनं परि दत्तात् पितृऽभ्यः ।

'Do not blow out his body here and there, but burn it well so that you will be able to reach him to the forefathers;

यदा गच्छति असुऽनीतिं एतां अथ देवानीः वशऽनीः भवति ॥

सूर्यं चक्षुः गच्छतु वातम् आत्मा यां च गच्छ पृथिवीं च धर्मणा ।

'O Omnipotent Agni, when you burn him all right, do take him to the manes; for only when he realises his self-strength, he will be able to reach the shining gods;

अपः वा गच्छ यदि तत्र ते हितं ओषधीषु प्रति तिष्ठ शरीरैः ॥

अजः भागः तपसा तं तपस्व तं ते शोचिः तपतु तं ते अर्चिः ।

'O dead friend, may the light in your eyes merge into the Sun; your vital breath into the wind; may you follow the sphere in the fulfilment of the law according to your "Dharma" and "Karma"; or to the earth, or to the watery region, or if you

desire, may you go to the vegetable world, in your newest form;

या ते शिवाः तन्वः जातवेदः तामिः वह एनम् सुऽकृतां ऊं (इति) लोकम् ॥

'O Jata-Veda, may you heat that portion of this dead being which is eternal by your glowing flames; with your comfortable vehicle, may you carry him to the land of those who have performed good deeds ;

अव सृज पुनः अग्ने पितृभ्यः यः ते आऽहुतः चरति स्वधाभिः ।

आयुः वसानः उप वेतु शेषः सं गच्छतां तन्वा जातवेदः ॥

'O Agni, this dead man, whose body has been offered by us into your flames, and who has been stirred by your natural strength, may you lift him up and convey him to the manes; may he wear on the garments of a new form; may he obtain all that he desired and did not get; may he, O Omniscient Agni, get a befitting body.' (R.* 10-16).

The term 'eternal portion—Ajo Bhag' is clear and points to the conviction of the Vedic sages that the 'Atma' is beyond the cycle of births and deaths. The idea 'let the light in the eyes go to the Sun' points to the knowledge of the Vedic thinkers that the body was composed of the five elements and that it dissolves again into them. The direction 'follow your actions' unmistakably indicates the view of the Vedic people that the individual-self follows the consequences of his actions. This is the famous Hindu 'law of action', which, there is no doubt from the above statement was fully known to the Rig-Vedic people who had left it as a legacy to the Upanishadic.

The soul is immortal but has to manifest itself through some physical form and when it does that it naturally becomes contaminated by the virtues and vices 'guna-dharma'—qualities and characteristics of that physical form. This can be clearly read from the following hymns:

'That which pulsates with breath, which is always restive and sentient, always in ceaseless motion, or action, that resides in this abode of the body. This individual-self, follows for the time being all the rules which govern mortal physical substances. There is here a wonderful phenomenon to see in the human body—the existence of an immortal soul in the cage of des-

tractible matter. The existence of the soul can be inferred from its actions and movements. Sometimes it goes ahead and sometimes it lags behind; but this immortal soul must always manifest itself only in the form of the physical body. Both of them are so thoroughly united that whatever they do they appear to do it together and with one spirit. So much so that the observers feel that it is the body that alone is moving or acting and they cannot disconcert the soul behind and underneath the body.' (Rig. 1-164, 30, 38).

अनत् शये तुरगात् जीवम् एजत् ध्रुवं मध्ये आ पस्यानाम् ।

जीवो मृतस्य चरति स्वधाभिरमर्त्यो मर्त्येन सयोनिः ॥

अपाङ् प्राङ् एति स्वधया गृभीतः अमर्त्यो मर्त्येन सयोनिः ।

ता शश्वता विषूचीना विर्यता नि अन्ये चिक्युर्न नि चिक्युरन्यम् ॥

Dr. Ketkar while admitting the existence in the Vedic literature of these concepts, viz., the 'law of action', 'the co-existence of the physical with the spiritual' or the 'sentient with the material', the 'immortality of the soul' and the 'possibility of some other spheres', does not accept that the Vedic people had any conviction about the theory of rebirth. He observes: 'The individual soul is involved in the cycle of rebirths which has no stop and end. This concept so much fascinated the minds of the people in the later periods that it has become almost inseparable in their philosophy and ethics. But there is not even a trace of this concept in the Rig-Veda. From this we can see that the trends and directions of thought in the Rig-Vedic hymns are completely different from those in the literature of the later periods.'

(Jnana Kosh: Second Part, p. 30)

The above view of Dr. Ketkar is not correct and can be disproved on the ground of Rig-Vedic hymns. The hymn, number 164, of the Rig-Veda is clear enough to show the holowness of the inference drawn by Dr. Ketkar. This whole hymn in fact comprises the views of the Rig-Vedic metaphysicians in regard to the individual soul. Professor Ranade has taken this hymn to satisfy all the objectors on the above subject. He writes: 'We have one very characteristic hymn of the Rig-Veda which, we fear, has not been noticed with even

a tithe of the attention which it really deserves. Ignoring the meaning which Roth, Bothlingk and Geldner have found in at least the two verses of the hymn, it is strange that people keep saying that the idea of transmigration is not to be found in the Rig-Veda. The hymn we refer to is the great riddle hymn of the Rig-Veda I: 161. It consists of fifty-two verses and breathes throughout a sceptico-mystical atmosphere. It says that He who made all this does not himself probably know its real nature, and it sets such a high price on the mystical knowledge which it glorifies that any one who comes to be in possession of this knowledge, so the hymn proclaims, may be said to be his father's father. In spite of the Herakleitean style in which the whole hymn has been composed, in spite of the fact that it contains, allusions to such various conceptions as those of the Fire, the Cow and the Calf, and the First-born of the Law, a psychological vein is ever present through the whole hymn, and among other things, the "two birds", namely the individual soul and the universal soul make it unmistakable that the poet is darkly expressing, in his metaphorical way, his ideas about the nature of soul and the relation between the individual and universal souls. For example the poet asks us, who has ever seen the precise mode in which the boneless soul, the very life-blood and informing spirit of the earth, comes to inhabit a bony tenement? And if a man did not see this himself, who has ever moved out of himself and gone to the wise man to receive illumination on it? Then the seer says categorically that this breathing, speedful and moving life principle is firmly established inside these tenements of clay. Moreover he tells us that the immortal principle, conjoined with the mortal one, moves backwards and forwards, by virtue of its natural power; but the wonder of it is that the poet goes on to say that the mortal and immortal elements keep moving ceaselessly in opposite directions, with the result that the people are able to see the one, but are unable to see the other. These two verses were regarded by Roth and Bothlingk and Geldner as against Oldenberg to have supplied sufficient evidence as to the proof of the existence of the idea of transmigration in the Rig-Veda, as they rightly thought that the

verses tell us that the soul is a moving, speedful life-principle which comes and goes, moves backwards and forwards, comes in contact with the body and then moves from it in the opposite direction. 'The culminating point of the whole doctrine is reached when the poet tells us that he himself saw (probably with his mind's eye), the guardian of the body, moving unerringly by backward and forward paths, clothed in collected and diffusive splendour and that it kept on returning frequently inside the mundane regions. That this "guardian" is no other than the soul may be seen from the way in which verse 31 follows immediately on verse 30 which mentions the "breathing, speedful, moving life-principle;" moreover the frequentative (*varivarti*) tells us the frequency of the soul's return to this world.'

(Constructive Survey of Upanishadic Philosophy, pp. 149, 150, 151, 152)

The pertinent verses from the hymn deserve to be marked specially: Sage Dirghatamas who has put in the hymn so many riddles before the philosophers to solve, says: 'I have realised that the individual soul which is bound to assume some physical form appears in his usual manner here in this world and disappears from it. The soul appears in association and disappears with separation from the body repeatedly round and round (31). The soul does not know him who created him; because he who keeps a constant watch over him is concealed from him; because of that non-realisation this individual soul which gets wrapped in the womb of the mother in the form of an embryo is always plunged in a sea of misery (32). I have not yet realised that all that is, is but my own self; and hence bound by my own mental ignorance I am confounded and ever in motion in quest. But when the sentient consciousness which flows from the eternal and ultimate truth entered within me, since then this divine knowledge and speech rose in me.' (1-164-37)

It comes to this that the fundamental concepts regarding the individual soul, its absolute distinction and difference from

the physical mortal frames, the various organs and aspects which make the latter, its omnipotency in all that is seen round in the universe, and its identity with the universal soul, etc., concepts which represent the views of the Bharatiya philosophy in regard to the subjects like the matter and spirit the soul and the body, etc. had been fully thought out, and evolved to perfection in the Vedic period as such, as can be seen from the above references. If the individual soul has to carry on this merry-go-round of births and deaths it is only on account of its non-realisation of its true self, which ignorance involves it into a course of actions which in their turn according to the law of action drag the soul into this world and make it suffer the good or bad consequences until it does come to realise its true self and become free once for all from the ceaseless round of births and deaths. It will be noticed that there was nothing which was added in the Upanishadic period to these basic concepts. What the Upanishadic thinkers did was merely to systematise the Vedic thought and give it a finer expression and explanation so as to bring it within the reach and understanding of common intellect.

If thus it is accepted that the Vedas do disclose that there was evolved a considerable and highly logical theory about the subject of the body and individual soul, it may further be asked, had the problems of the Universe and the universal soul also been thought out and solved by the Vedic sages? What was the general thought of the Vedic people in regard to the riddles of the universe and the maker of the same?

There are innumerable deities mentioned in the Vedas. In fact a majority of the hymns of the Rig-Veda, are prayers in praise of these deities and godheads. If the Vedic people conceived so many individual gods and godheads, how could they possibly conceive a fundamental unity and reconcile their belief in the pantheon with the monotheistic thought which came to be evolved in the later Upanishadic period? It is really unreasonable to doubt that the Vedic thinkers who know so much about the individual soul should be so much ignorant about

the universal soul or the one ultimate Almighty as the Creator of this Universe. For those who have to be satisfied with actual evidence on this issue we now turn to present all that is available and which is indeed abundant to throw clear light on the thoughts and beliefs of the Vedic people in regard to the more important problem of the Universal soul, and the great 'cause of all causes', the Almighty.

CHAPTER XIII

PARAMATMA—THE UNIVERSAL SOUL IN THE VEDIC PHILOSOPHY

There exists more misunderstanding about the Vedic thoughts on the Paramatma or the Universal Soul than what we have examined about the individual soul. Instead of accepting what theories the literature of the period propounds and establishes, it has become an unaccountable habit with the Bharatiya research scholars who have been very much under the influence of the Western thought and methods to pervert and misinterpret the original texts to suit their preconceived axioms. Why otherwise an intelligent scholar like Dr. Ketkar should discover the beginnings of agnosticism in so clear and conclusive a hymn like the 'Nasadiya' which is unmistakably a hymn on the doctrine of 'monotheism'—'adwait'? How irresistible is the temptation of this confounding method has to be only imagined? We now propose to review the concept of the Universal Soul according to traditional interpretation in the Upanishads first. After that we shall turn to the thoughts of the Vedic sages in regard to this aspect of inquiry so that we shall be able to say if the Vedic thought was in any way different or primitive from the Upanishadic.

The Bhagwat Gita describes this universe as the manifest-middle. The primary element or the original matter of this manifested universe is the unrevealed or unmanifested and the end or the conclusion of it is also a dissolution in the imperceptible infinite. The Universe which is in the unmanifested state in the beginning and in the end, manifests itself for a while in the middle. In this universe there is ever present a duality, the matter and spirit, the subject and object of enjoyment, or in other sense the subject and object of knowledge, the knower and the knowable thing. The Bharatiya philosophers consider this strife between the duality as the prime cause of this whole manifestation in the form of the wide universe. This constant flow or the play of duality of the matter and spirit has been adjudged to be beyond any

knowledge of its beginning, and it follows without any end. The Gita reveals the nature, the function and motives of the counter elements in the duality as follows:—

‘The Purush and the Prakriti are both without a beginning; but the transformations and their qualities are the products of the Prakriti (XIII-19). This physical body and the organs in it are the creations of the Prakriti, which is its cause; while the Purush is there to taste the joys and sorrows’ (XIII-20).

It is all very well to tell the common intellects that this play between the duality is without any beginning. What it actually means is that no human intellect can count or imagine when the game must have started. Nevertheless, a scientific intellect cannot be silenced with such a hypothesis or presumption of ignorance. And that genius of human intellects which refuses to be silenced or be satisfied with such an ignorant presumption asserts:

‘If it is logical and scientific to reach to the Prakriti as the source of all the diversities in the universe as the Sankhyas and other dualists resort to, then, it is illogical for the same reasons to stop at that. And then if we are to inquire into the cause of this duality of the Purush and Prakriti, we must reach to some one unity of element from which the duality must have started. It must therefore be presumed that beyond and beneath this duality of the Purush and Prakriti, there exists some prime element which is eternal, immortal but unmanifested and which is the source of the duality manifesting in the universe. It is out of the will-power of this primary element that the matter sets in motion. The matter is, by its very inherent nature, qualitative and quantitative. Whatever is material, i.e., qualified or can be measured in quantity is destructible and perishable. But the prime source or the element which is the cause of all causes must be absolutely devoid of all limitations of quality and quantity, end or beginning, in which all that is manifest and qualified must dissolve. It is only that which persists, that is the real, eternal and all pervading principle from which the universe rises. Bhagwat Gita reveals this truth as follows:—

‘That “Sanatan”, eternal element, which is beyond, but at the root of all that is manifest and unmanifest, persists even

after the elements dissolve and disappear. There are two varieties of the Purush: one is that which manifests, moves and disappears and the other is that which lies hidden behind. But the real supreme Purush is different from these both. That reality is called the Supreme Self or the Universal Soul. It is that unmanifested supreme element which pervades the whole universe and sustains it. That entity which is beyond the transformable and the unmanifest—which is identified with Me, the Supreme Soul, is called in common parlance and in the Vedas as the Supreme Being. This whole objective universe which is merely the manifestation of that Supreme Brahma which permeates in it, is indeed eternal and indestructible. That real element which is at the bottom of everything that is visible and invisible is beyond anybody's power to destroy. O. Arjun, the conqueror of the physical world, I tell you there is nothing beyond that, that is Myself. As a common string runs through all the beads of a rosary, this whole universe is woven round Me. It is I who have manifested this Universe and it is I who permeate through it. All that matter and elements which you see around are entwined in me.'

(Gita 8-20, 15-16, 17, 18; 2-17, 7-7, 9-4)

परस्तस्मात्तु भावोऽन्यो व्यक्तोऽव्यक्तसनातनः ।

यः स सर्वेषु भूतेषु नश्यत्सु न विनश्यति ॥

द्वाविमौ पुरुषौ लोके क्षरश्चाक्षर एव च ।

क्षरः सर्वाणि भूतानि कूटस्थोऽक्षर उच्यते ॥

उत्तमः पुरुषस्त्वन्यः परमात्मेत्युदाहृतः ।

यो लोकत्रयमाविश्य विभर्त्यव्यय ईश्वरः ॥

यस्मात्क्षरमतीतोऽहमक्षरादपि चोत्तमः ।

अतोऽस्मि लोके वेदे च प्रथितः पुरुषोत्तमः ॥

अविनाशि तु तद्विद्धि येन सर्वमिदं ततम् ।

विनाशमव्ययस्यास्य न कश्चित्कर्तुमर्हति ॥

मत्तः परतरं नान्यत्किञ्चिदस्ति धनंजय ।

मयि सर्वमिदं प्रोते सूत्रे मणिगणा इव ॥

मया ततमिदं सर्वं जगदव्यक्तमूर्तिना ।

मत्स्थानि सर्वभूतानि न चाहं तेऽन्ववस्थितः ॥

The sum total of all this metaphysical thinking is that in the view of Bharatiya philosophers, there is only one ultimate reality that persists and that is nothing other than the Supreme Brahma about which all that can be said is that it exists. If all the names and forms which shroud this underlying reality are brushed aside for a while then it can be very clearly realised that nothing remains behind except the existence of that omnipotent element. That Supreme Brahma or the universal soul is the only real thing. All other things which subsist on it are not real, nor have any independent existence. That sovereign, all-pervading reality, or the Brahma, as it is called, is one homogeneous principle, unique and self-dependent, and self-conscious. That reality being without a second, there is nothing in the universe besides it or different from it. That alone is the reality, all the rest merely unreal illusions. The distinction between the seer, the sight and site (view), etc., are merely illusions caused by ignorance about their identity. All the three are in ultimate analysis one and identical, with the illusions caused by ignorance about their identity. All the three are in ultimate analysis one and identical, with the great reality. The 'Para Brahma' is the prime cause of all this universe including the living and the lifeless objects. The Para Brahma is also the fountain of all the energy and light obtaining in the Universe. It is in fact the essence of everything.

If such is the Supreme cause of the universe, a chain of questions naturally rises. If it is indeed true that the Supreme cause pervades everywhere, then how could the Universe, which is qualified, destructible, perishable, limited and diverse in its forms and qualities, could be produced from a cause which is indestructible, without the limitations of quality and quantity, and eternal, beyond bounds of time, and direction, self-dependent and homogeneous? For it is the law of causation that the effect inherits the qualities of the cause. It is never observed that a cause can produce an effect completely different in character, and qualities from it.

The objection seems to be indeed very logical but the Bharatiya metaphysicians have presented a very satisfactory explanation to the same. They say that this law of causation,

namely like cause like effect, or the theory of causation as propounded by the Samkhya philosophers, is true only when the cause and effect belong to the species or categories. It cannot hold true in case of different categories. For instance the real but qualityless 'Nirguna' 'Parabrahma' is the cause and the unreal but qualified universe is the effect. The cause and effect the 'Parabrahma' and the 'universe' are not the same categories. Where only the first thing, the cause is real, while the second, the effect namely the universe is totally unreal, merely an illusion, how can the law of causation be applicable? The Bharatiya philosophers have explained the riddle by assuming that the world is all unreal and an illusion. If once it is confessed that the Moon is one and without a second, how can there be a scope for the law of causation to creep in to explain the innumerable reflections of the single Moon? Is there not a difference between the real nature and form of the Moon determined by the scientists and those seen by naked eyes or alluded to by poets? Then where is the difficulty in holding that pure 'Supreme Brahma' as the real thing and its manifestation in the form and name of the universe as merely an illusion perceived by inefficient and ignorant senses with their limited powers? Is it not observed that different senses impute different names and forms on the self-same inconvertible objects and deceive themselves by a delusion of diversity? It is not necessary that there must be something in the original object to give rise to such a delusion. Let us assume for a while that we get some other sixth sense; and imagine what will be the consequence in regard to our knowledge of the universe. There is no doubt that the Universe will appear to us somewhat or much more different from what it is to-day. If by some chance the power of perception in our eyes increases as high as the X-ray, then, will not the universe which we see with our bare and weak eyes to-day, assume quite a novel shape? And if by chance that power of sight as high as the X-ray stays with us, then undoubtedly all our current definitions of things, their shapes, forms and names will undergo a change; our concepts will change; new standards of comparison will arise; quite a different set of measures and

values of our ideas of the beauty of form of the human and the material world will replace the present one. There are two views of looking at things, one the common sense view or the pragmatic, and the other the scientific view. The modern scientists affirm that the real forms of things in the universe are nothing else than the combinations of atoms and electrons ceaselessly in motion with a speed which is beyond the power of human brain to compute or imagine. They tell us that light and sound are nothing other than the frequency of the motion of these electrons in a given original element. Sound and light are convertible. They now assert that there is nothing in this universe which can be said to be lifeless and steady; but that everything that is, is only the motion, which is the ultimate cause of the human body, the organs of senses and actions, the brain and all other parts. What difference we witness is merely an illusion caused by the sequence of time and the frequency of motion. 'This is in short the current scientific theory. But how much of this can be realised with our naked and aidless eyes? It may also be asked, that knowing the scientific truth can we make it the base of our social behaviour! Man moves in the society with a broad common sense attitude and keeping before his eyes a pragmatic view point. But when the question comes as to what is truth, then of course we have no other course but to resort to the scientific view-point, namely, the motion of the electrons. There is no limit to the man's penetration into the depths of science, and in the current days, when this scientific research is going on at such a high speed and adding to our knowledge such a bundle of startling facts about the universe, that it is inevitable but to accept the condition that the original real is different from the apparent illusion. This apparent illusion does not in the least or in any way affect the original reality, because the illusion is the result of causes according to the 'Vivarta' theorists, quite different from the real, which truth also does not require to be doubted or challenged. In the explanation of this system of thought then, the apparent cause of the objective universe, namely, the three-fold 'Maya', matter, or the 'Prakriti' is not anything absolute and independent from the real Supreme Brahma, but purely an imputation on

it in the form of an illusion created by the senses of a sentient being which are incapable of understanding the whole truth. Once this key-thought is grasped well, it will be easy to understand how the Bharatiya philosophers have explained the manifestation of and the multiplication in the universe according to the law of causation.

The universe, when it stands before us for analysis presents its two aspects, namely, the names and forms so innumerable and diverse, and the real substance beyond and beneath the screen of these names and forms. Of these two the first, namely, the perceptible physical universe of names and forms is called by the Bharatiya philosophers as the 'Saguna Maya', the qualitative universe or the 'Prakriti'; and the other which is imperceptible but more real and basic, and absolute, and different from the apparent, is called the eternal 'Para Brahma'. Having asserted that this Supreme Reality being the only eternal element, the Bharatiya philosophy further expounds that the whole field, the subject of perception and knowledge which is called the Kshetra is unreal, merely an illusion, a 'Maya'; and that the 'Kshetragna' the individual soul belongs to the category of the Supreme Soul. In their thought, the individual soul is identical with the Universal or the Supreme Soul; or rather it is more correct to say that there is nothing in this universe or beyond it except this 'Self', identified with the Universal Soul, or the 'Supreme Being'. Lord Srikrishna affirms this in the Gita as follows:—

ममैवांशो जीवलोके जीवभूतः सनातनः ।

मनःषष्ठानिन्द्रियाणि प्रकृतिस्थानि कर्षति ॥

अनादित्वान्निर्गुणत्वात्परमात्माऽयमव्ययः ।

शरीरस्थोऽपि कौन्तेय न करोति न लिप्यते ॥

'It is a fraction of "My Being", that assumes the form of an individual soul in the universe and attracts towards it and gets wrapped up into, the six senses including the mind. (Gita 15-7). But this soul, being beyond birth or death and devoid of qualities or any character though encased in the human body which acts, is absolutely functionless and in reality

does not get contaminated or bound by the consequences of actions. (Gita 13-31). The Sun illuminates the whole universe; so also this Soul, the master of the body, all alone and by itself enlivens and enlightens the field, the Kshetra.'

(Gita XIII-33).

यथा प्रकाशयत्येकः कृत्स्नं लोकमिमं रविः ।

क्षेत्रं क्षेत्री तथा कृत्स्नं प्रकाशयति भारत ॥

In conclusion, it can be affirmed as the most fundamental and the most significant concept of the Bharatiya philosophy that the Supreme Being is the only one, homogeneous, eternal indestructible element, the ultimate reality, that exists all throughout, and persists through the unmanifested and manifested universe, whether living or lifeless and that the individual soul which comes to occupy the individual forms and names as the master for a time being, which is otherwise termed as the 'ego' is, as much the same and identical with that Supreme Soul, which pervades the entire existence as a drop of nectar is identical with a sea of it. In other words, one Omnipotent Reality pervades through everything living or lifeless, manifest or unmanifest and that is the Supreme Being. Many Western philosophers have now begun to appreciate the validity of this Bharatiya concept. Dr. Whitehead reiterates the theory of the Gita when he says: 'All things are entwined in me like the beads of a rosary, through which a common string runs to sustain them.'

This theory of the Bharatiya philosophy has stood unchallenged, unrepudiated for all these centuries in the world. The truth is that all that we see and all that which we do not see but exists is the one reality, conscious and self-content. The waves of water are not different from the substance of water. So also the names and forms are not different from the real substance which underlies them. The universe and the universal soul are identical in the thought of the Bharatiya philosophy. It is the Supreme Reality that persists and creates illusions in the form of this perceptible universe.

This fine and perfectly developed theory of the Bharatiya philosophy which can be traced from the Rig-Vedic days down to the modern times can give us a correct glimpse of how the

seeds of thought were sown right in the Vedic literature. How that eternal principle manifests itself in so diverse forms, has been very lucidly explained by one of the gifted philosophers of modern Bharat. Aravinda Ghosh has observed, 'spirit has become matter by crystallisation, self-limitation and exclusive concentration. A movement of evolution has made the spirit terminate into matter. A return journey, evolution, would make matter culminate in spirit.' This cryptic essence of his thoughts on the nature of the universe and its relation with the Universal Soul has behind it the whole background and support of the centuries of Bharatiya philosophy. To come to this conclusion after a personal experience, the Yogi Aravinda had to perform a penance for his whole life. The other great soul who could be acclaimed as one who had realised self-knowledge is Ramakrishna Paramahansa. He also harps on the same truth. In his gossips and gospels, there are innumerable passages which can be quoted to illustrate this concept of the Bharatiya philosophy. If it is said that this evolution or the perfect expression of the essence of Bharatiya philosophy is possible only now in the modern days of scientific enquiry and knowledge but was unimaginable in the bygone ages, it is not very correct; for we find that in the past centuries, almost in every century, there has been some outstanding personality, sage or an ascetic, a saint or a poet, a philosopher or a theologian, who has dived into the depths of secrets of the universe and the eternal reality behind it. Ramdas, Tukaram, Tulshidas, Jnyaneshwar and so many others have bequeathed the experiences of their lives for the posterity to follow. There is not a difference of even a word or a dot between the experiences and expressions of these great masters in their realisation of the secrets of life and those of their ancient predecessors.

Bhagwan Shankaracharya the greatest exponent of Monism of course stands supreme amongst all the philosophers of the world up to the present day in the matter of self-realisation and perfect exposition of the truth. In his inestimable unique contribution to world philosophical thought accomplished in so short a life-time, he had declared to the world that the 'Brahma is the only real thing and all else is mere illusion'.

Shankaracharya is removed from the Upanishadic days by centuries but there is not the slightest difference or variation between the views which he propounds and the Upanishadic theories. There are critics who object that the theory of illusion, the 'Mayavad', propounded by Shankaracharya has no place in the Upanishads. Prof. Ranade in his famous 'Survey of the Upanishadic Philosophy' has given a silencing reply to the critics. He says: 'one of the chief ways in which an attempt is generally made to trace the source of the doctrine of Maya in the Upanishads is to find out a concordant reference to a word like Maya, and to argue therefrom as to the presence or otherwise of that doctrine in the Upanishads. Such a procedure is an entirely ridiculous one, in as much as it finds the existence of a doctrine like that of Maya in words rather than in ideas. To find out whether the doctrine of Maya is present in the Upanishads or not, we must examine the ideology of the Upanishads, and see whether this effort is sufficient justification for saying that the doctrine is to be met with that. We shall see that in the sequel to this chapter, that there are definite traces of that doctrine to be met with in Upanishadic literature, and that so far from Shankar having fabricated a new conception altogether, or having owed it to the influence of the nihilistic school of thought, he may be definitely said to have gone back to the Upanishads to find his inspiration there, and as may be fit for a true thinker and philosopher, to have elaborated it out of the inchoate mass supplied to him by the Upanishads. Our conclusion therefore is that Shankaracharya only elaborated the ideas that he found in Upanishads and wove them into the contexture of his Advaitic philosophy.' (p. 224).

It is not necessary, though possible to assemble here all the evidence from different Upanishads in support of the one consistent thought which runs through all of them. Yet we shall cite here some passages to give a broad idea of the Upanishadic chain of thoughts on the subject.

The Ishavasya Upanishad says: —

ॐ पूर्णमदः पूर्णमिदं पूर्णात्पूर्णमुदच्यते ।

पूर्णस्य पूर्णमादाय पूर्णमेवावशिष्यते ॥

यस्तु सर्वाणि भूतान्यात्मन्येवानुपश्यति ।

सर्वभूतेषु चात्मानं ततो न विजुगुप्सते ॥

यस्मिन्सर्वाणि भूतान्यात्मैवाभूद्विजानतः ।

तत्र को मोहः कः शोक एकत्वमनुपश्यतः ॥

स पर्यगाच्छुक्रमकायमव्रणमस्त्राविरं शुद्धमपापविद्धम् ।

कविर्मनीषी परिभूः स्वयम्भूर्याथातथ्यतोऽर्थान्व्यदधाच्छाश्वतीभ्यः समाभ्यः ॥

हिरण्मयेन पात्रेण सत्यस्यापिहितं सुखम् ।

तत्त्वं पूषन्नपावृणु सत्यधर्माय दृष्टये ॥

'That "Para Brahma" is a perfect whole; this limited or modified Brahma is also full and perfect; this modified Brahma rises from that perfect limitless Brahma; though for a while it drops out separate from the infinite one; yet it never loses its character of fullness and perfection (1). The person who sees his own self in all other objects and souls outside himself, and all other things as identified with his own self, never hates or despises others (6). When all things and lives are identified with one's own self, when self-knowledge dawns upon a man and he begins to realise the identity of one's self with all the souls, how can he be disturbed by affection or sorrow (7). That soul, the ultimate reality, pervades all around us; that is pure, absolute, devoid of any form or name, unbroken into pieces, that is one composite whole but infinite, uncontaminated with the vices and blemishes of ignorance, free from all the consequences of merit and sin, omniscient, omnipotent, supremely best, and being the self-born, that essence of freedom, the Supreme Being assigns to Prajapati the objects according to their deserts, according to the law of cause and effect, action and its fruits (8). Truth is concealed in this universe in a golden vessel; it is necessary to invoke the grace of God to lift up the golden vessel and allow the truth to be seen.' (The veil that screens the truth or the vessel that contains it is here described as golden. Being so dazzling bright, it tempts the mind of the onlooker and rivets his attention on itself with the result that the man forgets to look for the real thing, the truth. God's grace is necessary to lift the veil and reveal the truth. The moral is: let us not be

dazzled by the golden appearances of veils and vessels, bodies and objects of joy—everything that glitters is not gold; let us look for the truth behind the veil and the vessel).

Thus it has been seen that there is a consistency and identity of thoughts throughout the experiences and expressions of the Bharatiya philosophers right from Aravinda and Ramakrishna back to Shri Shankaracharya, and to the remote Upanishadic sages. What the ancient sages discovered in their lonely meditations in forests, they handed over as a legacy of thought to be scientifically refined, which Shankaracharya and others (to some extent), did in a matchless manner, leaving nothing to be desired more. Now we will try to see whether this trend of thought can be discovered in the Rig-Vedic literature. It is our belief that the Vedic sages had realised the secrets and given expression to their experiences in the Rig-Vedic hymns. In fact it is that knowledge of the Rig-Vedic thinkers which became the base and a background for the moulding of the social and cultural life of the Bharatiya people. Any impartial purveyor who looks at 'this unbroken chain of the ethical and the metaphysical thought will have to admit that the structure of the Bharatiya society and the ethical base of its social life rests upon the deep foundations of the firm and doubtless principles, which the Rig-Vedic sages had laid down. We have already examined the thoughts scattered in the vast Vedic literature about the 'field of knowledge' and the 'knower', 'the body and the soul'. Let us now try to find out what the sages perceived and thought of the universe and the universal soul or the 'Supreme Being' and his manifestation in the form of this universe. That will help us to determine the philosophy and the principles which governed the life of the Vedic nation.

We find in the Rig-Veda the descriptions and invocations of a horde of godheads. The Rig-Vedic sages look to these deities with awe and wonder. They describe them in super relative terms. Who are these godheads? We shall certainly discuss this later on. For the present we only observe that what some people regard the Rig-Vedic gods to be merely as riddles of unresolved phenomenon in nature is due to a lack of proper understanding of their significance and functions. There is

no doubt that the moment we open a page of Rig-Veda a number of godheads stand before us. There is also no doubt that the Vedic people had created a pantheon, or a galaxy of gods and demi-gods in their life. It is on this ground argued that the first stage of the Vedic philosophy was a belief in multi-gods and in course of time the godheads began to drop out from their thoughts resulting in the end in the realisation of one element as a Supreme Being. Such a hypothesis is, we say totally, without any logic behind it. For it can be shown that even when the Vedic singer offers his prayers to a number of gods, and invites half-a-dozen godheads with the offer of his oblations of the Soma juice, he has a conviction that behind all of them there is one eternal reality persisting. He is sure about the one principle which runs through everything by any number of names he may invoke them. He has never any doubt that beneath and behind the diversity of matter, names and forms of the various gods, there is an identical homogeneous unity. The hymn which we have already referred to tells us as follows:—

इन्द्रं मित्रं वरुणमग्निमाहुरथो दिव्यः स सुपर्णो गरुत्मान् ।

एकं सद्ब्रिप्रा बहुधा वदन्त्यग्निं यमं मातरिश्वानमाहुः ॥

‘The one reality is called by different names like Indra, Mitra, Varuna, Agni; and it is also said this is the Garut bird with fine wings. But the fact is behind all these, there is only one Truth—the Real thing—which the learned Brahmanas call as Agni, Yama, Matarishwa, etc.’ (Rig-Veda 1-164-46).

If the following hymns are read carefully, it will not be very difficult to gather the views of the Vedic people in regard to the problems of the Supreme Being and the Universe, and man’s relation and place in it. The sixth mantra of the famous hymn 164, in the first Mandal observes:

अचिकित्वात्र चिकितुषः चित् अत्र कवीन् पृच्छामि विद्मने न विद्वान् ।

वि यः तस्तंभ षष्ठ इमा रजांसि अजस्य रूपे किं अपि स्थित् एकम् ॥

‘I have really no knowledge in regard to these questions; I am an ignorant fellow; with a curiosity to know all this from those who understand the problems, I ask them, if it is not a fact that there is some unity and oneness in that Supreme

Being, who has created all these six worlds and who sustains them.'

The third mantra of the forty-second hymn in the fourth Mandal says:—

अहम् इन्द्रः वरुणः ते (इति) महिऽत्वा उर्वी इति गभीरे (इति) रजसी
(इति) सुमेके (इति) सुऽमेके । त्वष्टाऽइवविद्वाभुवनानि विद्वान् सम् ऐरयन् रोदसी
(इति) धारयम् च ॥

'Indra is myself; Varuna is myself; the two spheres so wide in expanse, so deep in depth, and so enchanting standing by their own greatness are indeed my own manifestations; and it is I as the Creator, knowing everything, have set the spheres in the universe in motion and keep them moving for ever. (Rig. IV, 42, 3).

Then look at that famous mantra from the tenth Mandal which is regarded as the corner-stone of the Hindu social order, a land-mark in the history of the Vedic people in regard to the evolution of their concept of the society and the nation. The hymn which is called the prayer of the 'Purush' is, for all it signifies, a bold and beautiful, and at the same time a whole concept of the nation. The prayer recites:

सहस्रऽशीर्षा पुरुषः सहस्रऽभक्षः सहस्रपात् ।
स भूमिं विश्वतो वृत्वा अति अतिष्ठत् दश अङ्गुलम् ॥
पुरुषः एव इदम् सर्वम् यत् भूतम् यत् च भव्यम् ।
उत अमृतऽत्बस्य ईशानः यत् अन्नेनऽमतिरोहति ॥
एतावान् अस्य महिमा अतः ज्यायान् च पुरुषः ।
पादः अस्य विश्वा भूतानि त्रिपात् अस्य अमृतम् दिवि ॥
त्रिपात् ऊर्ध्वः उत् ऐत् पुरुषः पादः अस्य इह अभवत् पुनः ।
ततः विष्वह् वि अक्रामत् साशनानशने (इति) अभि ॥

'That Purush (nation-personality) has thousand heads, thousand eyes, thousand feet. That Purush envelops the whole sphere and still outreaches (out-remains) by the figures. All that we see around is that Supreme Being, all that which once existed and indeed all that which will come to exist in future. That Purush is really the Master of immortality. (i.e., the unique condition) which is not subject to age, decay, and

death; he is the one all over—lord of also the world that grows with food; (2).

‘That Purush is by far greater than all this greatness of his around us which we witness and experience; for all this objective universe is merely a fourth of that infinite being, and the three other parts which are as infinite and eternal are in the Divine reality outside and beyond this physical appearance (3).

‘Thus this Supreme Being which is indicated by that three-fourths of the eternal existence appears here in the fourth part in the form of the perceptible Universe made up of all that is sentient and living which grows and sustains on food, and all that which lies dormant without it (that is animate and inanimate) all this he contains in himself.’ (Rig. X. 90. 1-4).

Dirghamtamas the talented inquirer, further says: ‘It is said that the Supreme Being creates and sustains all this world. But who has seen that Supreme Being without any bones, frame or form, being born or sustaining this universe which is physical? Can I ask where was all this matter and spirit, the constituents which go to make this Universe, when the ‘Supreme Being’ was born? Has any one seen or gone to ask that Supreme Lord who is said to know all these things? (Rig-Veda 1-164-4).

The same Rishi further on narrates: ‘I see two enchanting winged comrades sitting on the branch of a tree; they have charming wings; they are in love with each other; one of the pair is enjoying the relishing fruit of the tree, and the other keeps on looking with full glee at the sight of it.’

(R * 1. 164, 20).

The sage concludes by expressing his self-realisation that ‘the great sustainer of the Universe ‘from whom the joy of immortality which the birds inherit, and enjoy, and which they illustrate is Himself enshrined in him.’ (Rig-Veda 1. 164, 21). (The example of the birds illustrates the relation between the individual and the Universal, one engrossed in action—eating, the other enjoying the sight of it).

को ददर्श प्रथमं जायमानम् अस्त्रवंतं यत् अस्त्रा विभर्ति ।

भूम्याः अस्रुर् असृक् आत्मा क खित् को विद्वांसं उपगात् प्रष्टुम् एतत् ॥

द्वा सुपर्णा सयुजा सखाया समानं वृक्षं परिषस्वजाते ।
 तयोरन्यः पिप्पलं स्वादु अत्ति अनश्नन् अन्यो अभि चाकसीति ॥
 यत्रा सुपर्णा अमृतस्य भागम् अनिमेषं विदधाभिस्वरन्ति ।
 इनो विश्वस्य भुवनस्य गोपाः स मा धीरः पाकमत्रा विवेश ॥

Instances can be multiplied to show the thoughts of the Vedic philosophers which even in the very early stages appear to have been fully evolved. They had come to final and unfaltering convictions about the nature of the universe, the character of the individual soul, and the truth of the ultimate reality, the 'Supreme Being'. There is hardly any difference between these thoughts of the Vedic sages and the later Upanishadic philosophy. In fact it can be asserted without the least chance of contradiction or refutation that the fundamental principles of the Bharatiya metaphysics had been almost perfected by the Vedic sages themselves, and that there is nothing new or previously unsaid which the later thinkers added. What they did was to put the scattered Vedic ideas in a scientific and logical terminology. If this is generally true, there are indeed original verses and hymns which could not be improved upon by the Upanishadic thinkers and they had therefore to adopt them without the slightest change of a comma or a stop. Take for instance the Nasadiya Sukta. This Sukta has so thoroughly and faultlessly presented all the principles in such a systematic manner and an elegant poetic diction that the later Upanishads had to adopt them bodily in their theories. We cannot pass over this Sukta as it crystallises the Vedic view about cosmogony.

नासदासीन्नो सदासीत्तदानीं नासीद्रजो नो ब्योमा परो यत् ।
 किमावरीवः कुह कस्य शर्मन्नम्भः किमासीद्गहनं गभीरम् ॥
 न मृत्युरासीदमृतं न तर्हि न रात्र्या अह्न आसीत्प्रकेतः ।
 अनीदवातं स्वधया तदेकं तस्माद्दान्यन्न परः किंचनाऽऽस ॥
 तम आसीत्तमसा गूढमग्रेऽप्रकेतं सलिलं सर्वमा इदम् ।
 तुच्छेनाभ्वपिहितं यदासीत् तपसस्तन्महिनाऽजायतैकम् ॥
 कामस्तदग्रे समवर्तताधि मनसो रेतः प्रथमं यदासीत् ।
 सतो बन्धुमसति निरविन्दन् हृदि प्रतीभ्या कवयो मनीषा ॥

तिरश्चीनो विततो रश्मिरेषाम् अधःस्विदासीदुपरिस्विदासीत् ।

रेतोधा आसन् महिमान आसन् स्वधा भवस्तात् प्रयतिः परस्तात् ॥

को अद्वा वेद क इह प्रबोचत् कुत आजात। कुत इयं विसृष्टिः ।

अर्वाग् देवा अस्य विसर्जनेनाथ को वेद यत आबभूव ॥

इयं विसृष्टिर्यत आबभूव यदि वा दधे यदि वा न दधे ।

यो अस्याध्यक्षः परमे व्योमन् सो अंग वेद यदि वा न वेद ॥

‘Then in the beginning, there was no Asat—naught; there was also no Sat—aught; there was not the space or atmosphere beyond this Sat—the Universe. Under the circumstance how can we say as to what had covered what? Where could that be said to have been occupied? For whom could it be said to have done so? Could it be said that there was that wide and deep expanse of water even? (1)

‘There was nothing like death then, naturally even the thought of immortality was not there; (death is a condition inevitable with the physical creation, but when it is said that there was no physical universe at all there was no idea of death logically, in fact everything was eternal, immortal; there was nothing like death to distinguish as there was one infinite reality without name, form, or frame). Then there was no division of time like night and day, for there was no measure or means to determine and differentiate between one time and the other. (It is the Sun that makes the division of time in night and day, but when it is said that the Sun was not there nor the space nor the stars, etc., naturally time as an element did not exist). Whatever then was, was all one and unique, living by its own light, and breathing without breath or wind, merely a conscious element. Besides or beyond that there was nothing anywhere. (2).

‘Then there was all darkness, all water, all space, all were enveloped by the illusion of that, which they call the Supreme Brahma, which later on assumed different forms and frames and manifested itself.’ (3).

‘The seed in the mind of that Supreme Being, the will to create, became the first beginning, the cause of the creation; that was the bridge between eternal reality, which was invisible and the universe which became perceptible. This is the con-

sidered conclusion of these gifted seers; who have thought of the problem of the Universe, and its Creator.' (4)

'These rays or strings (of desire of the Supreme Being) came as links between; being links they were at all ends below and above (the fertile will); conceived and produced; their potency became manifest in this Universe; their power permeated beyond it.' (5)

'Who indeed knows how this visible universe expanded itself so wide and wherefrom? Who can explain this in more explicit and understandable words? Who in fact knows this for certain? Even the gods are post-creation! Who can then vouch wherefrom the universe was created?'. (6) (Note the candid expressions of doubts of the poet. Note also his startling view of the rise of the concept of God after the creation).

'This universe manifested and expanded this-wise from this, or that-wise from that, was created in this manner or that, who could know and tell this except that, "Supreme Golden Being" who presides over all this in the highest space, if he knows it, or may be, he knows not!' (7)

This is one of the most valuable of the hymns from the Rig-Veda. It is called 'Nasadiya', after the first words 'Nasad' with which it begins. It gives us very clear clues of the Bharatiya approach to the task of resolving the riddle of the Universe. Unlike the Western philosophers or the materialists who refuse to think beyond the visible, the Bharatiya metaphysicians do not stop at the physical world. Instead of being confined to the thought of all that is visible to the eyes or perceptible to the other senses, they endeavoured to go beyond into the realm of the imperceptible by their sixth sense and tried to realise the secret of life, the eternal principle, the ultimate reality, which is the substratum of the universe. The author of the above Sukta, sage Parameshthi could at once without mistake put his finger on the ultimate truth, the essence of all thought. That is surely a measure and indication to give us an idea of the excellence of his genius and intuition, and the penetrating power of his thought process. This Rishi brushes aside all the questions regarding what was there before the beginning of creation of this universe. Whether there was some imperceptible, eternal, element, or some material in the

form of water, air, fire, etc., whether it was subject to decay and transformation or whether it was immortal, whether there was some space or darkness all around, such questions do not disturb him. He looks beyond these problems and arrives at a conclusion that all these real and the imperceptible, the destructible and the immortal, darkness and the light, the container and the contents, the pleasure and the enjoyer, all this talk of duality pertains to a condition after the creation of the universe. Before this objective word gives rise to the language of duality, there was nothing except the one fundamental reality, homogeneous, infinite, without any distinction and difference. Because of that one eternal, infinite, homogeneous element, which existed before the creation, it could not be described in the terms of duality, which arise only as a result of the objective creation. What there was, was the unique, one indistinguishable element, which was self-conscious. There was nothing besides that. When the Rishi says that it was self-conscious and pulsating, it does not mean that it was breathing or that there was air, it is difficult to describe that live element in the terms of breath and life. The only adjective that can describe the essence of that reality was that it was alive by its own essence. There appears a little contradiction when it is affirmed that the real, ultimate element was alive without inhaling the breath. But this apparent self-contradiction is merely the inefficiency of the language of duality to describe that prime condition of the 'Supreme Being'. It is on that account the Supreme Being, or the fundamental reality has been called by later Upanishadic philosophers in negative terms like, 'not this, not this', 'one, without a second', 'self-existent in its own essence'. (Chandogya 7-24-1).

What has been said to exist before the beginning of the creation in the above Sukta, remains after the universe is dissolved in the end. The Gita describes it in other words, 'that which remains undestroyed after the universe is dissolved is the 'Para Brahma' which cannot be said to be 'Sat' in the sense of visible, and also cannot be said to be 'Asat' because it is invisible.

Having thus revealed the nature and characteristic of the supreme 'Brahma', the question that puzzles the inquirer, is

how is the objective universe produced from that indescribable infinite reality. To answer and explain the manifestation of that reality into the three-fold universe one has to adopt the terms of duality, namely, mind and will, real and unreal, etc. But the Vedic thinker declares that howsoever we may try to explain the manifestation of that imperceptible element into the perceptible forms, frames, and names, the process has to be realised only by a sense of knowledge and not by arguments. In fact the Gita tells us that the ultimate 'Supreme Being' is beyond the comprehension of intellect alone.

While we may accept this explanation, about the process of the descent of the 'Supreme Being' in the manifestation of the universe, a doubt does persist, when we are told, that it is like a sacrifice, or the building of a house. If the creation is a 'Yajna', where did the material for the performance of the 'Yajna' come from? If this universe is something like a construction of a house, where did the material, wood and mud come from? These unanswerable questions, which have been raised in the fashion of later Greek philosophers like Heraclitus have been asked centuries before by the Vedic inquirers. There is indeed no better reply to them than the descriptions in the analogy of the rays of the Sun spreading all around when the Sun arises. There is no better convincing explanation than the cryptic reply, 'Well, the Supreme Being desired it', 'the Supreme Being willed it that I should multiply'. The 'Para Brahma' was stirred with a will to multiply and to manifest its homogeneous self into diverse forms. This prime will, which can be called the desire or it may be described as the discontent—became the stir of that living infinity. Atharva-Veda therefore calls this prime will or the discontent as the cause of the whole universe.

This explanation of the Vedic philosophers of the creation of the universe, the process of tracing the cause of this material world to the imperceptible element through the 'Nimitta' instrumental or efficient cause, namely, the will, is not accepted by the Samkhya philosophers. The Samkhyas reach to the 'Prakriti', the material as the ultimate cause of the universe. They refuse to go beyond this Prakriti and connect her with the Purush, which concept is not acceptable in their logic. The

Samkhyas are indeed the forefathers of the present materialists. But the Vedic Rishi tells us that if you are not convinced of this process, if your logic and intellect do not approve of what we say, then you may at the most declare that you are incapable of understanding it, you are ignorant. That does not mean according to the Rishi that there is the absence of the 'Supreme Being' because he is indescribable, for we have realised the presence of that essence. The Rishi further asks a cross-question to the materialists. According to the Samkhyas who consider the Prakriti as the prime cause of the universe, they have to assume the rise of 'Mahan'—intellect which is otherwise called 'Ahankar'—'Ego' for the causation of the universe. The Samkhyas like the Vedantists also cannot explain this rise of 'Ego' in the 'Prakriti'. The Vedantist, therefore, asks, if you have to presuppose the rise of Ahankar in the Prakriti to become the 'nimitta' cause—'efficient cause', of the creation, why do you not accept our 'will of the Supreme Being' as the nimitta cause? At the most you may say that you do not understand the process of the descent of that 'Supreme Being' into the manifested universe or the transformation of that imperceptible element into the physical world; but there is no necessity to assume 'Prakriti' as separate and independent! What of men even the divine beings are incapable of understanding or explaining the transformation of the real into the unreal. For even these divine beings are post-creation; only that one 'Supreme Being', the 'golden centre', the Lord of all that is creation, the Master, the King and as the Vedic Rishi addresses, the 'President', who presides over the creation, must be knowing or can be said to know the truth. If he indeed knows, then the process cannot be said to be unknowable. But the Rishi is not a dogmatic asserter. He fears that even that 'Supreme Being' may not possess the knowledge. Not because of any incapacity to know, but because, the very idea of knowledge pertains to a stage after the creation. But there is not the least doubt or hesitation in asserting that there was one infinite eternal reality before the creation which will also outlive the dissolution of this universe or the fading away of the illusion about it.

'This is one of the most shining and proud instances of an honest and bold searcher after truth in the evolution of the history of philosophy of the world. It is a matter of supreme surprise that such a bold analysis and enquiry should be incorporated in the Rig-Vedic literature which has been acknowledged to be the oldest in the history of mankind. The subjects which have been handled in the Sukta have become the topics of ceaseless study in the fields of metaphysics and science in Bharat as well as in the Western world. A philosopher like Kant has in great detail examined the postulates which we find in this Sukta. It is indeed a great surprise that, what the Vedic sage realised centuries ago in the remote past, has not been surpassed in the clarity of thought, the boldness of questioning, and in the matter of conclusions which he has drawn. The later philosophers have not been in a position to add a word or improve upon the expression of the Vedic sage. What the later philosophers have endeavoured to do is only to corroborate and reaffirm the truths and theories established by the master of that penetrating intellect. Indeed there is no scope, or even the capacity to go beyond what our Vedic forefathers have revealed to us.'

(Gita Rahasya: By B. G. Tilak)

It may be asked whether this Upanishadic philosophy was purely a subject of didactic and academic discussions or whether it was ever a matter of personal experience and self-realisation. It has also to be seen whether we can reconcile the diversity of the godheads, in the Vedic pantheon with the philosophy of the unique monotheism of the Upanishadic and later ages. The Bharatiya concept of 'Maya', the 'illusion' theory, startles modern minds. They begin to search out if the word 'Maya'—illusion could be traced into the Vedas. But as Professor Ranade says 'the controversy should not be about the word "maya" but about the concept of illusion.' There should not be any contradiction or confusion between the common sense view and the scientific view. If in the common sense view the universe appears to be real, it is indeed called so, by the word 'Sat' in the Upanishads. But this very 'Sat', 'the perceptible universe', is 'Asat' an 'illusion' in the scientific view,

whereas what is 'imperceptible' to the common sense view, is a real, in the scientific view and called 'Sat' by the Upanishads. In Bharat philosophy is not a profession, but a practice. One who knows the theories and the science may be at the most called a 'professor' but he is never respected as a 'philosopher'. It is only the spiritual experience in the light of the philosophy that comes to be respected in this country. On that account philosophy and spiritual life become identified in the life of a person who has attained self-knowledge. If we cast a glance on the Vedic literature, we shall find luminaries from page to page down from the Vedas to the Upanishads. Surprisingly the tradition is being maintained right through the middle ages upto the modern contemporary days, by such illustrious figures like Ramakrishna Paramahansa, Maharshi Ramana, and Shri Aravind. Having examined the Vedic thought, let us now turn to find out if the same had been translated in actual life by the Vedic people.

अपश्यं गोपां अनिपद्यमानं आ च पराच पयिभिध्वरन्तम् ।

स सघ्नीचीः स विषूचीर्वसानः आवरीवर्ति भुवनेषु अन्तः ॥

य ई चकार न सो अस्य वेद य ई ददर्श हिरूक् इत् नु तस्मात् ।

स माधुर्योना परिवीतो अंतर्बहु प्रजाः निर्ऋतिम् आविवेश ॥

न विजानामि यत् इव इदं अस्मि निष्प्यः संनद्धो मनसा चरामि यदा मा
आ भगन् प्रथमजाः ऋतस्य आत इत् वाचो अश्रुवे भागम् अस्याः ॥

CHAPTER XIV

THE VEDIC THEORY OF SELF-REALISATION

MAHAYOGI Aravind Ghosh has observed: 'If it is not possible to deny the highest level of philosophy which we get in some mantras of the Vedas, the problem that presents before us, is how in that infant stage of thought were the Vedic seers inspired with those highly philosophical truths. The very fact that these high ideas so easily occurred to the Vedic sages is an indication that the basis of their approach to life indisputably must have been of the supreme order.'

This observation of a modern Rishi—Mahayogi Aravind—should give us an idea as to how the pursuit of philosophy in Bharat had never only an academic interest. When the Bharatiya philosophers go in search of the secrets of life, their main object is to realise the higher truths in the life itself. It is in search of an ideal life that the philosophers pursue the domain of metaphysics. In this quest for knowledge the Bharatiya philosophy was born.

The fundamental questions which agitated the Vedic mind in the early stages could be stated as follows: 'What should be the object and utility of the unique intellectual powers which man has secured as a favour from the Creator? If this genius has to be fully purposeful, then it must find its field and purpose in the life of man. If some suppose that man's life is purposeless, it is the height of folly. The satisfaction of senses either cannot certainly be the only aim of human life. This conviction is so deep in the Bharatiya mind that right from the earliest records down to the modern times a Hindu born in Bharat always thinks of finding the object of his life. In the Bhagwat Puran it is said: "I created so many cities with so many legs, a city with one leg, two legs, three legs and a city also without any legs; but of all those cities on legs the best indeed is this body which belongs to man which is the nearest to me." The Almighty who had created with his inherent power this diverse universe which contains trees,

stones, water, wind, animals, reptiles, crocodiles, birds, ponds and fish, was not pleased with his own creation but when he saw the form of a human being, God was delighted. In that human brain he found the intellect which could give to its possession the knowledge of the Supreme Being. But this happens after a tedious journey through so many births and deaths. It must be always remembered that the human form like all other forms is subject to decay and death. It is only in the human birth that the individual soul can escape the pursuit of death by realising its identity with the Supreme Soul. And therefore a wise man should endeavour to think of the ultimate object of his life and achieve it.'

(Bhagwat, Skanda 11, Sloke 10-11)

This is the great lesson which the Bharatiya philosophy impresses upon a thinking man. Human birth comes seldom to a soul: and when it comes it should be fully utilised in getting the eternal freedom. So it becomes the primary duty of every being to discover the object of his life. The question then arises what is this thing which is called life? Who am I? What is this globe and the universe? What is the relation between me and this universe around me? Is there any controller of this physical creation? Is it possible that the Lord who presides over the creation could have intelligence, a plan and a purpose for that creation? What could be the nature and the form of that Supreme Being? Is he related to me, the individual? Such and so many other questions stare at a man who wants to know the purpose of his life. It is this chain of questions which we have already referred to in the last chapter that became the starting point of the Bharatiya philosophy. In fact these very simple questions are at the root of all metaphysical enquiry and thought. Thus it will be apparent that the Bharatiya philosophy is the result of the intense desire to discover the purpose of human life. It is this philosophy that determines the purpose, and directs the individual how to realise it. It then ceases to be merely of academic interest but becomes almost a guide for the experiments of self-realisation. This is the fundamental difference between the Western philosophy and the Bharatiya Vedant. The Western philosophers in-

deed followed the analytical and deductive methods which the Bharatiya thinkers had adopted. Spinoza, Bradley, Kant, Whitehead and others have indeed come very near to the theories established by the Bharatiya philosophers. But they have never thought of realising the truth or moulding their own lives according to their thoughts. Philosophy for them was merely the pursuit of dry didactic knowledge having no relation with its experiments or experiences in life. It is for this reason that the great master Plato while he presented a picture of an ideal Philosopher-King could not imagine that the ideal Philosopher-King could be shown as completely detached from or above all passions and pleasures. He had therefore to suggest his fantastic idea of common messes and common procreation by ridiculous methods for the fear that even the camps and colonies of these ideal leaders would fall prey to selfish sentiments. Unlike Socrates and Plato or their modern followers, the Bharatiya mind does not admit the thought that by mere acquisition of knowledge, life can be made ideal or perfect. Knowledge helps one to know the ideal, but to bring that ideal into reality something more is essential. That is called 'Tapasya' or penance in Sanskrit terminology. It is an admitted fact that Ravana was an accomplished and very learned person. Ravana was well-versed in the Vedas. He had performed great penance, and was devoted to the worship of fire. But that vast knowledge of the Vedas and the uninterrupted worship of fire could not save Ravana from avarice and vices. Ravana was a passionate man and his passion for beauty could not be curbed by his knowledge of the Vedas. It is a truism that knowledge does not alone save a human being from the beast in him. There is another instance of how a man without character and penance remains a brute in spite of tons of knowledge. Duryodhana, the villain of Mahabharata, has himself said, 'Oh, I know all the duties and responsibilities, and yet there is no inclination for me to follow my Dharma. I know also what is against law and morals; and yet there is no break in my inclination towards it.' This type of possession of knowledge has not been at all valued or admired in the Bharatiya thought. Shukacharya says in Bhagwata, 'those who profess to know the philosophy

appear to me like vulgar children shouting in the month of Falguna. They indulge in pleasures of sense and inflate the population, instead of pursuing the path of self-liberation. All their tall talk of philosophy is just like the obscene hullabaloo of boys on the Holi Purnima Day.' Such is the verdict of our Bharatiya philosophers in regard to the so-called professors of philosophy who are in their actual life completely divorced with the principles which they publicly preach. This explains how the so-called great men while talking the language of universal brotherhood could butcher humanity in their own countries. It is because of this self-contradiction that a great thinker like Kant remained a slave to his tongue. Such professors can never attract the attention of Bharatiya people as ideals. Bharat claims that knowledge must reflect in the actions of man. In every word that one says, in every action that one does, in fact in every function, his body must reverberate and throb with the sentiments and sense of an identity with the humanity and universe. It is possible when the realisation of the truth has been achieved by an individual soul. But it is not an easy thing. It happens only after a ceaseless endeavour running through a series of births indicating a continued course of self-control, meditation and worship that the secret dawns upon some blessed soul. The Bharatiya philosophy is thus a subject of self-realisation and a key to transforming the individual into Ideal or the Divine.

This self-realisation is not possible to be attained merely by the reading of books. In fact intellect is not the thing on which we can rely to see the truth. According to our science four things are necessary before a man can become eligible for the realisation of the truth. In his commentary on the Brahmasutras, Shri Shankaracharya has given the four requisite conditions which must be fully satisfied before one should desire to go in search of the truth. These four things are:---

(1) Correct comprehension of the eternal and illusory universe, (2) complete renunciation of enjoyment of fruits of action or indulgence in pleasures in this and the other life, (3) control of passions, resignation, strength to endure, self-contentment, and (4) implicit faith, are the primary qualifica-

tions which have to be acquired. After that only the quest of the secret of Brahma can be begun.

Such, being the intimate relation between philosophy and life in the Bharatiya thought, it is but natural that the philosophy should consider itself fruitful if it is corroborated by individual experience. We have instances right from the remotest early ages through the Upanishadic period down to the modern times of great souls having realised self-knowledge. The Bharatiyas did not stop at mere thinking of the relations between the universe and its creator or between the soul and the Supreme Being. They went further to find out if what they arrive at by intellect could be realised and experienced in life. Is it necessary to cite all the examples of the illustrious souls who are reputed to have realised the ultimate truth? The world-famous Ramana Maharshi, one contemporary of ours, is considered to be such a perfect soul. Aravind Ghosh was another. Aravind had been the recipient of self-knowledge. World-famous Swami Vivekanand is also considered to be such a gifted personality. His master Ramakrishna Paramahansa was indeed a living and walking Parabrahma in incarnation. We can get in the recorded experiences of all the Bharatiya saints and philosophers, the land-marks or the road-signs of their travel from knowledge to self-realisation. Even in the Buddhist, Jain, Mahanubhav and other non-Vedic sects, this principle is fully recognised. The Buddha philosophy later on came to be divided into two sects. Besides these two, there is a third less known secret sect of Buddhism. It is called the 'Zen' Buddhism. This secret sect believes like the Vedic sects in the theory that the truth cannot be realised by reason. Reason is a bar to the understanding of the ultimate reality. The sect therefore impresses upon the disciples to go beyond intellect to find out the light. In this sect it is said only limited persons are admitted. This Zen could be traced to 'Dhyan' meaning meditation in Sanskrit. It must therefore be admitted that there was not a single sect or a branch of knowledge in Bharat in which more stress was not given upon the necessity of practice of penance for the realisation of the knowledge which intellect presents.

There is not even a single sect of faith in Bharat which has not produced personalities who have realised the ultimate

truth. A notable feature of these sects is, in spite of their multiplicity and variety every enquirer after truth has been able to reach the goal by the path pointed out by them. Unlike other religions and faiths, Bharatiya philosophy does not consider that self-realisation is possible only by a prophet here and there. The Bharatiya philosophy promises every individual soul who accepts the discipline and undergoes the penance, that he will reach the distant end.

The Bhagwat Gita which is considered to be the final and the finest expression of the whole philosophy of the Upanishads has one chapter, the 11th, which describes and demonstrates the omnipresent figure of the Supreme Being. This chapter is recognised to be of utmost significance in the thesis of the Bhagwat Gita in as much as it is in this chapter Lord Krishna reveals the miracle of his 'universal form' which nobody had until then ever seen with eyes, and much less described in words. It was only after the vision of that all comprehensive godhead that Arjuna who could not be convinced with the lucid logic and arguments of Lord Krishna became assured of the truth and surrendered himself completely at the feet of Shri Krishna, declaring that he would follow his advice. This is the secret of the Gita.

It is said that Tilak after he completed his world-famous treatise on the Gita, sent the first copy to his revered teacher Maharshi Annasaheb Patvardhan. This great philosopher asked the man nearby to open chapter 11 and read to him what Tilak had to say on the same. He wanted to see whether Tilak had understood the real essence of the philosophy contained in Gita because according to the Bharatiyas that philosophy has become a subject of living faith, a matter for spiritual experience, and not merely of academic dialecticism. The Upanishads say: 'When a soul realises his self, there is no need of his being afflicted by the worries or pleased by the pleasures of life. When the ultimate unity is experienced, there remains no subject which can move him to shed tears of sorrow or joy.' The dialogues between Yajnavalkya and Maitreyi in the Brihad Aranyak Upanishad is a clear direction and guidance to the path of realisation of the Self. The sage tells his disciple, 'to see the soul and not to hear or read about him. It

is the feeling, the experience, the realisation and not the wordy academic discussion. Meditation, penetrating thought and Samadhi for the realisation of that ultimate reality are the road-signs which lead a man to the destined end, viz., the realisation of the identity of the Supreme Being with the self. The sage says "the soul has to be seen, has to be heard, has to be meditated upon. O Maitreyi, the Atma is a subject of self-realisation." As a result of this self-realisation the individual soul comes to a stage when all actions stop, all attachments come to an end. Indra is recorded to have said, "when this happens, even the murder of a Brahman, or a preceptor, nay of the mother or the father, does not affect or spoil—even by a hair such a person who has realised his own self." On the other hand, one who has missed the self-knowledge is condemned by the Upanishads as a self-murderer.'

This theory of spiritual life, and the faith in self-realisation is called by Western philosophers as mysticism. It is no surprise that these materialistic philosophers who have no experience of the spiritual life and who cannot think beyond the physical world should call this spiritual life of the Bharatiya thought as mysticism. If we are to believe the experiences of those who declare to have realised the knowledge of that ultimate reality, and there is no reason to disbelieve them, or to disregard them as dishonest, hypocrites, or quacks, then according to them the joy which flows from such self-realisation is indescribable. One Upanishad tells us, 'if a youth well-born, educated, intelligent, strong, cool and collected were to get the gift of golden globe he will indeed be pleased. The pleasure will be human pleasure; but the joy which comes at the realisation of the self is a thousand times greater than at the acquisition of such a golden globe. The joy of the realisation of Brahma is infinite, unique and indescribable.'

The process, the means and methods by which such a joy of knowledge could be gathered have been finely described by Upanishads. We give below some extracts which will throw great light upon the means and methods and the results of obtaining that self-knowledge.

'When one feels the presence of Brahma, the Supreme thing in this universe, then all the doubts in his heart dissolve, all the merits and sins disappear.' (Mund. 2-28).

भियते हृदयग्रंथिः छिद्यन्ते सर्वसंशयाः ।

क्षीयन्ते चास्य कर्माणि तस्मिन्ष्टे परावरे ॥

स होवाच ऋग्वेदं भगवोऽध्येमि यजुर्वेदं ... राशिं देवं निधिं वाकोवाक्य-
मेकाग्र्यं, वेदविद्यां, ब्रह्मविद्यां, भूतविद्यां, क्षत्रविद्यां, नक्षत्रविद्यां, सर्पजनदेवविद्यां एतद्-
भगवोऽध्येमि सोऽहं भगवो मंत्रविदेवास्मि नात्मवित् श्रुतं ह्येव मे भगवद्दृशेभ्यः तरति
शोकमात्मविदिति सोऽहं भगवः शोचामि तं मा भगवान् शोकस्य पारं तारयत्विति ॥

परां चिखानि व्यतृणत्स्वयंभूस्तस्मात् पराह पश्यति नान्तरात्मन् ।

कश्चिद्धीरः प्रत्यगात्मानमैक्षदावृत्तचक्षुरमृतत्वमिच्छन् ॥

नायमात्मा प्रवचनेन लभ्यो न मेधया न बहुना श्रुतेन ॥

वेदान्ते परमं गुह्यं पुराकल्पे प्रचोदितम् ।

नाप्रशान्तायदातव्यं नापुत्रायाशिष्याय वा पुनः ॥

यस्य देवे परा भक्तिः यथा देवे तथा गुरौ ।

तस्यैते कथिता ह्यर्थाः प्रकाशन्ते महात्मनः

'One who has experienced his identity with the Brahma has nothing to be afraid of.' (T 2, 9).

आनन्दं ब्रह्मणो विद्वान् न बिभेति कुतश्चन ॥

'Such a person becomes completely dissociated from his body, he becomes thoroughly fearless, and self-dependent. Being identified with the Brahma he himself becomes fearless.' (T 2, 7).

यदा हेवैष एतस्मिन्नदृश्ये अनात्मे अनिरुक्ते अनिलयने अभयं प्रतिष्ठां
विन्दते अथ सो अभयं गतो भवति ॥

'The soul is in fact sinless, ageless, deathless, devoid of the sentiments of sorrow, hunger, and thirst. The soul is inherently "tied to truth". This truth and real nature of the soul should be discovered. One who acquires the knowledge of self, becomes thoroughly satisfied, no passions and

desires remain in his mind, and he gets all that has to be desired.' (Chd. 8, 7, 1).

अपिपासः सत्यसंकल्पः सोऽन्वेष्टव्यः स विजिज्ञासितव्यः स सर्वांश्च लोकाना-
प्रोति सर्वांश्च कामान् यस्तमात्मानमनुविद्यविजानातीति ॥

'When one begins to feel that the universe is identical with the self, that is the stage which is called self-realisation. Sage Vamdev after he realised his own self exclaims: "I was Manu. It was I who gave the brilliant "Tej", light to the Sun. When a horse shakes his mane he shakes the water-drops from it. In that manner by the realisation of the self I have been able to shake off all the sins which had attached to me. The Moon, when she comes out of the eclipse is always full. Similarly when I realise myself I feel to have come out of all the chains and shackles of this physical frame."' (Chd. 8, 13, 1).

Narad once went to his Guru Sanat-Kumar. He said to him 'Master, I have studied all the Vedas, history and the Puranas "Pitru-Vidya" (ancestry), Mathematics, Astrology, Astronomy, Logic, Philosophy, Mysticism, Arms and Arts, Charms and everything that could become the subject of man's study, has been acquired by me. But in spite of this vast knowledge I am not able to cross this sea of worldly sorrows. I am uneasy and unhappy in my mind. For I feel, I am merely a book-worm. I have not yet come to know the real truth. You say that, this mundane world could be crossed by self-knowledge. But I am plunged into the ocean of sorrow. Will you not help me and show me the way to swim over and rise above?' This is how a Bharatiya individual approaches the problems of life and tries to find the purpose in it.

It is said that the Creator when he gave the organs of senses to man, he turned their direction outward. On that account man never introspects but looks on around. One who desires freedom from the cycle of life and death, a rare person like this, turns his eyes and intelligence inwards to the self and ultimately realises it. 'Sages and ascetics get to know that soul which is ever luminous and pure, by a course of conduct, truth and celibacy. The self can never be realised by mere discussions nor by intellect nor by wide learning.' 'One who has fortu-

nately obtained a right master is likely to know the real truth.'

Those who desire to follow the path of knowledge have to undergo a course of hard discipline and practice of penance. The Upanishads advise: 'Keep your body with its three main parts straight in a line; sit in a secluded pleasant place; withdraw all the senses and organs inside; focus your mind upon some one thing; do not allow it to scatter. Do not allow it to loiter on scattered thoughts but pin it down on the one real objective.' This is the direction for those who want to obtain a glimpse of that self. The mind of man is compared to a chariot yoked with very naughty galloping horses. The mind jumps, runs, scampers on different objects every fleeting fraction of a second. It has, therefore, to be curbed with a rigour and determination. The place where this experiment of self-realisation by the method of concentration and Samadhi has to be practised must also be a conducive one for concentration. It should be even levelled without ups and downs, without too much of heat and cold and necessarily clean and agreeably pleasing. A cave in a mountain is decidedly the best choice.

A Sadhak, who has practised this concentration and Samadhi for a time, begins to measure the power of the five elements. His body begins to reflect with lustre and essence of water, air, fire, wind and space. He becomes free from disease and age. Fear of death does not disturb him. His body becomes light and his health remains perfectly harmonious. His cravings and tastes wither away; his attachments to the objects of senses become looser and ultimately they vanish. His voice turns sweeter. His body gives out a fragrant smell. These are the signs which indicate the progress of a Sadhak on the path of self-realisation.

For a person who endeavours honestly there will always be progress. But it should never be imagined that the self can be realised all of a sudden in one night. Only a saintly life can go to the end and be one with God. It must be considered a great blessing to be enlightened with the highest knowledge of self; and to see the Truth face-to-face. Prof. Ranade has in an eloquent passage attempted to paint the picture of the stage of realisation of the self which a sage attains. Trisanku

who is reputed to have seen his Maker face-to-face has given vent to his most revealing experience which Ranade summarises as follows:—

‘The Mystic of the Chandogya Upanishad declares that even as a horse might shake its mane, similarly had he himself shaken off all his sin, that even as the Moon might come out entire after having suffered an eclipse from Rahu, even so, having been freed from the mortal coil, had he obtained the eternal life in the Atman’ (S. 28). Then, again, the utterances of Trisanku in the Taittiriya Upanishad are remarkable for the grandeur of the ideas involved in them. After Trisanku had reached self-realisation, he tells us, he felt as if he was the “Shaker of the Tree”. What is the Tree to which Trisanku is referring? It may be the Tree of the Body, or it may even be the Tree of the World. It is not uncustomary for Upanishadic and post-Upanishadic writers to speak of the Body or the World as verily a Tree. In fact, Trisanku tells us that, like the true soul that he was, he could move the Tree of the bodily or worldly coil. He tells us, furthermore, that his glory was “like the top of a mountain”, which is as much as to say that when he had come to realise the self, he felt that everything else looked so mean and insignificant to him from the high pedestal of Atmanic experience that he felt as if he was on the top of all things whatsoever. Trisanku tells us furthermore that “the source from which he had come was Purity itself”. May this not refer to the purity of the Divine Life from which all existence springs? Then, again, Trisanku tells us that he was as it were “the Immortal Being in the Sun”—an identification Isavasya-wise of the Individual and Universal spirit. Further, Trisanku says that he regarded himself as “a treasure of unsurpassable value”, referring probably to the infinite wealth of Atmanic experience that he had obtained. Finally, he tells us that he was verily “the intelligent, the immortal and the imperishable One”, thus identifying himself with the Absolute Spirit (S. 29). Finally, that greatest of the Mystics whose post-ecstatic monologue is preserved for us in the Taittiriya Upanishad, tells us in a passage of unsurpassed grandeur throughout both Upanishadic as well as post-Upanishadic literature that when he had transcended the limita-

tions of his earthly, etheric, mental, intellective, and beatific sheaths, he sat in the utter silence of solipsistic solitude, singing the song of universal unity: "How wonderful, how wonderful, how wonderful; I am the food, I am the food, I am the food; I am the food-eater, I am the food-eater, I am the food-eater; I am the maker of their unity, I am the maker of their unity, I am the maker of their unity", which utterances only mean, metaphysically, that he was himself all matter and all spirit as well as the connecting link between them both, and epistemologically, that he was himself the subject-world and the object-world as well as the entire subject-object relation, a stage of spiritual experience which has been well characterised by a modern idealistic thinker as a stage where the difference between the field, the fighter, and the strife vanishes altogether—the culmination of the unitive song being couched in terms which are only too reminiscent of like mystic utterances from other lands, "I am the first-born of the Law; I am older than the gods; I am the navel (centre) of Immortality; he that gives me, keeps me; him, who eats all food, I eat as food; I envelope the whole universe with splendour as of the Sun." (S. 30).

The sight of that ever-luminous flame of the eternal soul which illuminates this physical frame is itself a joy but when the self-experience of the identity of this soul-flame with the Universal soul-light comes to be established, then the sweetest song, without the least shade of sadness in it begins to muse on the lips of the seer. If we meditate upon and try to fathom the meaning of the experience as recorded by Trisanku in the above passage, we shall be convinced how the traditional faith in the identity of the individual souls with the universal spirit has been carried as a burning torch from epoch to epoch in this land. It should be remembered that this is not 'the only path by which one can reach the goal. There are in Bharatiya thought other means and methods also like the 'Hathyog', the 'Pranayam', the power of 'Mantras', etc., all of which enable an individual to reach the same end. The 'Patanjali Yoga-shashtra' has in full details explained the process and the practice of Yoga.

It has, therefore, to be concluded that the foundation of the Bharatiya philosophy had been laid firmly much before the

Upanishadic age. It may be argued that the Upanishads belong to a comparatively later period. There is no reason why it should not be supposed that the Rig-Vedic people had also understood and evolved this philosophy and the practice of self-realisation. We have already discussed the proposition that the basis of philosophical thought which the Upanishads present in a more systematic manner had been laid in the Rig-Vedic times. Let us now try to find out if we can trace the beginnings of the tradition of the practice of Yoga for self-realisation in the Rig-Vedic period also.

Let us first go through some selected pieces from the Rig-Veda which can hardly be distinguished from Upanishadic passages in substance and style. A Vedic bard Ambhruni says:

अहं रुद्रेभिः वसुऽभिः चरामि अहं आदित्यैः उत विश्वऽदेवैः ।
 अहं मित्रावरुणा उभा बिभर्मि अहं इन्द्राग्नी (इति) अहं अश्विना उभा ॥
 अहं सोमं आह्नसं बिभर्मि अहं त्वष्टारं उत पूषणं भगम् ।
 अहं ददामि द्रविणं हविष्मते सुप्रऽअव्ये यजमानाय सुन्वते ॥
 अहं राष्ट्री संऽगमनी वसूनां चिकितुषी प्रथमा यज्ञियानाम् ।
 तां मा देवाः विमदधुः पुरुऽत्रा भूरिऽस्थात्रां भूरि आवेशयन्तीम् ॥
 मया सः अन्नं अप्ति यः विऽपश्यति यः प्राणिति यः ईं शृणोति उक्तम् ।
 अमन्तवःमां ते उपक्षियन्ति श्रुधि श्रुत श्रद्धिऽवं ते वदामि ॥
 अहं एव स्वयं इदं वदामि जुष्टे देवेभिः उत मानुषेभिः ।
 यं कामये तमऽतं उग्रं कृणोमि तं ब्रह्माणं तं ऋषिं तं सुमेधाम् ॥
 अहं रुद्राय धनुः आऽतनोमि ब्रह्मऽद्विषे शरवे हन्त वै ऊं (इति) ।
 अहं जनाय सऽमदं कृणोमि अहं यावाऽपृथिवी (इति) आविवेश ॥
 अहं सुवे पितरं अस्य मूर्धन् मम योनिः अप्सु अन्त (रिति) समुद्रे ।
 ततः वितिष्ठे भुवना अनुविद्वा उत अमु द्यां वर्षणा उप स्पृशामि ॥
 अहं एव वातऽइव प्रवामि आऽरभमाणा भुवनानि विद्वा ।
 परः दिवा परः एना पृथिव्या एतावती महिना सबबूव ॥

'I reside with the Rudras. I live and walk with the divine Vasus. The Aditya and the Vishwa-Dev are my constant companions. Mitra and Varuna are my own forms; and what are Indra and Agni or the twins Ashvi-Dev, but me! The Soma which creates a stir of life, is my another form. The Twashtra,

Pusha and Bhag are my manifestations. It is I who confer upon the good sacrificer, who offers me the Soma juice, all that he desires. I am the mistress of this universe. The treasures of divine wealth of the world are in me. I am knowledge and light. I am the very first amongst the gods who deserve to be worshipped in sacrifices. It is I, that am described in different forms and different names. I reside in numerous places in multifarious forms at the same time. That a man eats, he sees, he breaths, he speaks, he hears, all such actions and functions of his are at my behest. But he does not know that men derive all their knowledge and spirit from me. You intelligent man, listen to me. I tell you what you will come to believe. I will tell you what men and divine beings will have to accept. It is this, that one who on account of his good actions, attracts my attention I raise him to the knowledge of self. I raise him to the stature of a genius, a Rishi. For the one who hates knowledge I take out the bow and arrow of Rudra to destroy him. For the good of the people I raise storms of wars. I permeate and pervade in the skies and the earth. It is I who have suspended the sphere over the head of this mortal world. But my real place is in the centre of the oceans. From that focal point I envelope the whole universe. I touch and kiss the skies and spheres. More than the winds I alone move further through the different regions of the universe, for it is I who have created them. I need not tell you that I reside here and beyond that space and beyond the globe. I have occupied everything that is with that infinite real essence—the grand reality.' (R. 10-125-14-8).

अहं मनुः अभवम् सूर्यः च अहं कक्षीवान् ऋषिः अस्मि विप्रः ।

अहं कुत्सं आर्जुनेयं नि ऋजे अहं कविः उशाना पश्यत मा ।

अहं भूमिं अददां आर्याय अहं वृष्टिं दाशुषे मर्त्याय ।

अहं अपः अनयं वावशानाः मम देवासः अनु केतं आयन् ॥

अहं पुरः मन्दसानः वि ऐरं नव साकं नवतीः शम्बरस्य ।

शतऽतमं वेश्यं सर्वऽताता दिवःऽदासं अतिथिऽग्वं यत् आवम् ॥

प्र सु सः विऽभ्यः मरुतः विः अस्तु प्र श्येनः श्येनेभ्यः आशुऽपत्वा ।

अचक्रया यत् स्वधया सुऽपर्णः हव्यं भरत् मनवे देवऽजुष्टं ॥

भरत् यदि विः अतः वेविजानः पथा उरूणा मनःऽजवाः असर्जि ।
 तूयं ययौ मधुना सोम्येन उत श्रवः विविदे श्येनः अत्र ॥
 ऋजीपी श्येनः ददमानः अंशुं पराऽवतः शकुनः मन्द्रं मदम् ।
 सोमं भरत् ददहाणः देवऽवान् दिवः अमुष्मात् उत्तरात् आऽदाय ॥
 आऽदाय श्येनः अभरत् सोमं सहस्रं सवान् अयुतं च साकम् ।
 अत्र पुरम्ऽधिः अजहात् अरातीः मदे सोमस्य मूराः अमूरः ॥

We came across another eloquent experience of a Rishi in the fourth Mandala of the Rig-Veda. Gautam Wamdeo says: 'I was Manu. The Sun also was myself; that brilliant intelligent sage Kakshiwan was also me. Kutsa, the son of Arjuna, was nobody but me. I was poet Kushna. Look at me: it is I who have gifted this land to the Aryas. For these charitable people I have sent showers of rains. The rivers that flow do so by my behest. Even the god and the godheads function in the universe according to my directions. It was I who once destroyed the 99 forts of the 100 Demons. The 100th resort I brought to the perfect peace and happiness. When I showered my blessings and protection on Divadas and Atithigva, on that occasion, the 100th demon also became the receptacle of my favour. O Maruts, the best among the birds the Shyena (a falcon) that takes its flight to the highest heavens, let it be the best and blessed one. Look, the bird, without any need of wheels, with the inherent strength of his wings brings down for the good of mankind, the Soma juice so pleasing to gods. That frightful bird took away the Soma from that place in heaven, the bird that could fly with the speed of mind, crossed the space and descended on this globe. It was that Shyena which has to be credited with the miracle of bringing the Soma juice to this mortal world. He had brought that plant of Soma, holding it fast into his claws from the highest heavens, down to this world to that joy and greetings of the mortal beings. It is indeed the Shyena that has to be credited with the offerings of lakhs of Soma sacrifices.'

(Rig-Veda 4-26-1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7)

यत्र जोतिर् अजस्रं यस्मिन् लोके स्वरहितम् ।

तस्मिन् मां वेहि पवमान । अमृते लोके अक्षिते इन्द्रायेन्दो परि स्रव ॥

यत्र राजा वैवस्वतो यत्रावरोधनं दिवः ।

यत्रामूर्यं हृतीर् आपस तत्र माम् अमृतं कृधि इन्द्रायेन्दो परि स्रव ॥

यत्रानुकामं चरणं त्रिनाके त्रिदिवे दिवः ।

लोकाः यत्र ज्योतिष्मन्तस् तत्र मां अमृतं कृधि इन्द्रायेन्दो परि स्रव ॥

One another Rishi Kashyap of Marich family sings in the Rig-Veda, Mandal 9, 'O winds, take me to that divine shining place where there will be eternal light, where there will be inexhaustible and immortal life. O pleasant Soma, may you flow for ever for the sake of Indra. There is a secret place quite beyond the shining spheres where Yama, the Lord of Death, the son of Vivaswan, resides, where deities of water reside; may you convey me to that secret abode and make me immortal. O Soma, the delightful, you shall flow for ever to please our Lord Indra. The highest place in the third region of the divine sphere, the one in which one can move for ever without check with full freedom, the abode where there is no darkness and everything is shining, I wish to be carried to that place; and then make me immortal. O pleasing Soma, you shall continue your ceaseless flow to please our Lord Indra. The place where noble people who perform their functions to attain certain aspirations as well as those who do so without any expectations reside, the place which is as if it were the pillar of this whole universe, the place which is the store of nectar that makes man immortal, the place where mere existence leads to full contentment, it is my desire to go and stay there! O pleasant Soma, may you flow for ever for Lord Indra. There is a place where there is eternal joy, where there is want of sorrow, where there is absolute happiness, laughter unbound and pleasures, where the desire came to an end, O Soma, may you carry me to such a place, and may you confer immortality on me, and then flow for the pleasure of Lord Indra.' (R. 9-11-3).

आपाम सोमं अमृता अभूम अगन्म ज्योतिर् अविदाम देवान ।

किं नूनं अस्मान् कृणवत् अरातिः किमु धूर्तिर् अमृत अर्त्यस्य ॥

इमे मा पीता यशसः उरुष्यवो रथं न गावः सं अनाह पर्वसु ।

ते मा रक्षन्तु विस्त्रसथरित्रात् उन मा स्रवात् यवयन्तु इन्द्रवः ॥

अग्निं न मा मथितं सं दिदीपः प्र चक्षय कृणुहि वस्यसो नः ।

अथा हि ते मद आ सोम मन्ये रे वान् इव प्रचरा पुष्टि मच्छ ॥

In yet another place a Rishi from the Kanva Gotra declares in ecstasy, 'we have drunk to our satisfaction that divine drink; we have indeed become deathless: we have attained divine knowledge. We have indeed realised the godhood. What shall those that are opposed to law and duty do to us? O immortal Soul, how can the villainy of man now spoil our bliss? These drinks of Soma have filled my mind with such inexhaustible and endless joy that like the bullocks tied to a chariot, the joy is inseparable from me. May the Soma protect me. May this drink of joy save me from fall of character; may that keep all diseases away from me. Let this Soma make me as luminous as the fire. O Soma, when I am in joy with you, I consider myself to be most prosperous. Let that feeling of pleasure and prosperity live with me for ever.' (R. 8-48-1-6).

These different Vedic Rishis who had attained the ultimate stage of self-realisation express their sentiments, and the joy, which they experienced in the moment of identification with the Universal Soul. The above sentiments of joy have been reflected in the thoughts of the Upanishads and Gita later on. There is absolutely no difference between the basic ideas in the Upanishadic expressions and Vedic experiences. What Tilak said about the Nasadiya Sukta is equally true of this experience of spiritual life in the days of the Vedas as in the days of the Upanishads.

When we have given so many instances of the actual experiences of Vedic sages, it is needless to tell the methods and the practices by which they reached that stage. It goes without saying that there must be some course of discipline and penance by which the experience becomes personally attainable. But for the modern critics who demand explicit evidence, we shall now cite some instances.

In the Vedas there are some hymns which have been adjudged as mystic riddles by modern research scholars. These ignored mystical poems are in fact the descriptions of the processes of realising the miraculous experiences. It has been shown already that the processes to reach self-knowledge are

intimately concerned with the development of the mind. It is naturally so as the realisation has to be experienced by the help of the mind. The Patanjali Yoga Shashtra therefore deals in detail with the analysis of the character, the functions, and the tendencies of the mind. It would be unreasonable to expect that sort of perfect and scientific treatment of the mind in the Vedas which we find in the later Yoga Shashtra. Crude as they may appear to be, the descriptions of the experiences of self-realisation which we get in the Rig-Veda undoubtedly indicate that there must have been some systematic study and course of practice. Look to the following instances: 'O Mitra and Varuna, when with your grace and skill you displayed the fact that your real essence was different from the unreal body, then we come to know the golden reality of your real self veiled in the external frame. That was first perceived by our intellect, then our minds witnessed it; after that our elemental organs and then the broad senses discovered the real essence of you.' (R. 1-139-2).

यत् इ ल्यत् मित्रावरुणौ ऋतात् अधि आ देदाथे अनृतं स्वेन मन्युना ।
दक्षस्य स्वेन मन्युना । युवोर् इत्याधि सद्धमसु अपश्याम हिरण्यम् । धीमिश्चन मनसा
स्वेभिरक्षभिः सोमस्य स्वेभिरक्षभिः ॥

This one verse alone is enough to become the basis of the later systematised thought in the Gita and Upanishads which tell us that the mind is beyond the organs; and beyond the mind, there is 'Buddhi' (intellect); and beyond that intellect resides that essence of life. What doubt there should remain that this systematic analysis had been discovered in the Vedic days in face of this explicit proposition?

Shri Aprabuddha in his treatise on the 'Science of Patanjala Yoga' observes:—

'Yoga is a genuine Arya science discovered by the Aryas, experienced by the Aryas and evolved by the Aryas. It has got an amazingly long continuity and that continuity shall remain unbroken even by the rise and fall of the people, or social revolutions. Those who care to have a look at the Upanishads and the Vedas will at once know that the science is there. Of course the word 'Yoga' is not found there, in the very sense of Patanjali but powers are distinctively mentioned. Not infre-

quently, it is noted in the Rig-Veda that particular knowledge is gained by means of concentrated thought or that a particular remote thing is said to be visualized by means of meditation. In the Ribhu Suktas it is often noted with all the ardour of devotion engendered by miracles, that the Ribhus turned the hide of a cow into an actual living cow, and that they created four cups (chamas) out of one on the spot. Not only this, but it is again described that by his sheer mental force a Ribhu actually created a living horse.'

(Science of Yoga)

सरस्वती साधयंती धियं नः इळा देवी भारती विश्वतूर्तिः तिस्रो देवीः
स्वधयां बर्हिर्वा इदं अच्छिद्रं पातु शरणं निषद्य ।
तदित् रुद्रस्य चेतति यद्वम् प्रलेषु धामसु ।
मनौ यत्रा वि तत् दधुर्विचेतसः ॥
इन्द्र त्वे अवितेत् असि इत्या स्तुवतो अद्रिवः ।
ऋतात् इयमि ते धियं मनोयुजम् ॥
वृषाऽयम् दन्द्र ते रथः उतो ते वृषणा हरी ।
वृषा त्वम् शतक्रतो वृषा हवः ॥
वृषा त्वा वृषणं हुवे वज्रिन् चित्राभिरुतिभिः ।
वदन्थ हि प्रतिश्रुतिं वृषाहवः ॥

Thus we find living spiritualism with all its concomitant means and systems of attainment in the Rig-Veda. The Vedic metaphysicians discovered an exclusive theory of causation—evolution of the universe from the 'Parabrahma'. The universe gets dissolved according to the Vedic theory in exactly the reverse process. The Rig-Veda categorizes the universe in three, five, seven ways. The earth, the sky and space are the first three categories. There is a system which is called 'Panchikaran' the mixing of the five elements in each other. Every physical object gets its particular form and characteristics according to the proportion of mixture of the three and the five factors. It is on that account that every object discloses a three-fold nature which even in Hindu science of medicine is recognised as the triple elements. In the Rig-Vedic pantheon, it is imagined that there are 33 godheads which are symbolic of the physical

potencies. The Gita theory of interdependence between the divine and the human, i.e., physical, is nothing more than a polished systematised expression of the Rig-Vedic thought of inter-relation and inter-dependence between the physical world and the spiritual reality. In the Rig-Veda the gods are considered to be free from decay and death, possessing all knowledge and powers having no other function or expectation except to fill the space and the universe. Indra is the Lord of this Pantheon. Vedic Rishis looked to Indra as their supreme ideal. The Rig-Vedic Rishis long for the sight and the personal blessing of this their Master. They imagine that Indra comes to and protects their homes. There are occasions when the Rig-Vedic sages have broken out in extreme raptures of joy and eagerness in their pleasure of having been in the presence of Lord Indra. Under the circumstances it is sheer ignorance if not folly on the part of those who have not at all grasped the highly scientific concept of Tridhatu evolved by the Vedic seers to try to dig out the secret behind it in the alleged 'nature-worship' of the Vedic Aryas—or in the 'elemental phenomena' described in the Vedas.

It must be observed here that even in those primitive races which indulge in what is called nature-worship, it is found that there is some nobler sentiment behind the so-called 'worship'. In the case of the Rig-Vedic sages, who had the sharp intellect to boldly ask some fundamental questions which have not been answered satisfactorily even to this day—in regard to the individual soul and the universal spirit, it would be sheerly unjust and illogical to say that they could not have conceived any nobler sentiment in their worship of the elements in nature than even the primitive people. Justice Woodroff observes: 'Even the Negroes of the Gold Coast are always conscious that their offerings and worships are not paid to the inanimate object itself but to the God and every native with whom I have conversed on the subject had laughed at the possibility of its being supposed that he would worship or offer sacrifice to some object of stone.' (Shakti and Shakta, page 279).

From all the above brief discussion it will be quite logical to assert that the basis of the spiritual life of Bharatiya people

namely the philosophical approach to the universe and its creator had been decisively evolved and established in the Rig-Vedic period itself. That very faith persists unshaken all through the middle ages right up to the present times; and the continuity of these spiritual values has been preserved by the Hindus. The mention and references of the experiences of spiritual realisation and the path to the realisation may be somewhat vague and undefined. Prof. Ranade has however clarified the reason for this vagueness in his renowned contribution, *Constructive Survey of Upanishadic Philosophy* (p. 325-326): 'It is true that, in the very nature of things, the problem of self-realisation could not be expected, to be expounded in a deliberate fashion by the Upanishadic seers. Nevertheless, mystic experience has itself to be suggested and communicated in a concealed fashion so as to enable the seekers after mystic life in their otherwise dark journey to know the lamp-posts on the mystic way. It is thus that we find in the various Upanishads mystical intimations of the realisation of the self, which are hidden like jewels beneath an intellectual exterior, and which he alone who has the eye for them can discern to be of immeasurable value.'

We have recounted in the foregoing chapters the evolution of Vedic ideas and ideologies regarding the individual, the Universe and the eternal Reality beyond them. We have examined different theories and objections and endeavoured to correct the misconceptions in the light of tradition as well as of the latest discoveries and scientific knowledge. Our discussions so far were more or less of academic nature, and therefore all what we have said cannot be conclusive and convincing unless it is shown that the Vedic people lived their lives according to the principles and precepts which they prescribed and preached. We will hereafter turn to more interesting chapters of the Vedic life to see how much the Vedic people tried to translate their thoughts in action—in their social behaviour, in their state affairs, etc., etc. The real value of ideas and ideologies must be measured by how most they can be put into practice and actually realised. The Vedic ideals by this test were fully realisable and in fact were fully realised which pos-

sibly is the secret of the grand survival of the race, and its philosophy, culture and civilisation. Let us therefore turn our eyes to those bright glimpses of the ever-pleasing panorama of life of the Vedic people.

CHAPTER XV

THE EXTENT OF VEDIC LITERATURE

WE now propose to look into the social and political institutions of the Vedic people. It is this aspect of life of the people, which will enable us to appraise the standard of their civilization. The evolution of culture and civilization of a people are measured by looking at how they lived and how they were governed. It will then become possible to discover how and why the nation which had once risen to such a noble height of civilization, degenerated and fell down. For this purpose all the major source of information, must surely be the Vedic literature itself. We must therefore first determine the extent and expanse of the Vedas or as we call it this Vedic literature. What indeed goes to make the Vedic literature? Let us first define its scope and range.

We have already affirmed that it is wrong to confine the term 'Vedas' only to the Rig-Vedic hymns. The Rig-Veda alone does not mean in the traditional view, nor make in historical analysis the Vedas. And from it alone, it is difficult to gather all the data to have a realistic complete picture of the Vedic nation with all its social and political bearings. It must not be forgotten that the Rig-Veda as such, is a collection of hymns made with a particular purpose and under a peculiar circumstance. It is a bit of surprise that great scholars like Dr. Winternitz and Dr. Ketkar, who agree with this proposition should, while writing upon these varied aspects of the Vedic life, refer only to the Vedic hymnical portion excluding the other supplementary and complementary literature which must indeed be considered as a part and parcel of the Vedas. This their circumscription of the extent of the Vedas has adversely affected the exhaustive or broad comprehension of the Vedic life resulting to that extent in injustice to the people and their civilization. We shall now first state the extent of the Vedic literature, before we turn to the subject proper.

Maharshi Apastamb has defined the term 'Veda' as including the 'Mantras' and 'Brahmanas'. He says the 'Mantra' and the

“मंत्रब्राह्मणयोर्वेदनामधेयम् ।”

'Brahman' together are called the Vedas. Accepting this traditional definition of the Vedas, we must include the Brahman literature in the study of the Vedas. The Brahmanas are in fact the prose content of the Vedas. It is the Vedic view that without the Brahman supplement no 'Mantra' can become complete. The Vedas were collected and codified particularly for the purpose of sacrificial rituals. The rituals of sacrifices have been exhaustively described only in the Brahmanas which also tell us which mantra must be recited on what occasion for what purpose and object. For this reason the relation of the Vedic 'Mantra' with the Brahman ritual is inseparably intimate. It is a Vedic truism that the 'Mantras' and 'Brahmanas' are as inseparable as life from the body.

Some put a wrong meaning on the word 'Brahman'. They imagine that the word Brahman simply suggests that part which indicates the procedure of priestly functions in a sacrifice. But this is wrong. 'Brahman' in this context means 'Yajna' and therefore the procedure and practice of the performance of a 'Yajna' as described and detailed out is called the 'Brahman'.

Mantra and Brahman are thus inseparable. A Mantra has to be recited at a particular sacrifice in a particular ritual, and the Brahman gives the prescription of the procedure of performing the ritual. This leaves no doubt about the interdependence of the Mantra and the Brahman.

It had happened at some time that in the two recensions of the Krishna Yajur Veda, namely, the Maitrayani and the Kathak, the Mantra and the Brahman portions had got intermixed. Yajnavalkya had undertaken to sort out the Mantra portion from the Brahman prescriptions. Because he did it, this is recension came to be called the Sukla Yajur-Veda, as it had been purified and the mixture was removed. That significant achievement of sorting out the Mantra and the Brahman portions in the Krishna Yajur Veda has been credited to Yajnavalkya. It is not correct to say that he wrote a

new Veda. Yajnavalkya did not do anything more than a proper arrangement of the Mantra and the Brahman. The legend that he got wild with his Krishna-Yajurvedic preceptor Vaishampayan, vomitted out the Krishna Yajur Veda, which he had learnt from him, and then approached the Sun with a prayer to bless him with a new Veda, has to be understood and interpreted only in a symbolic sense. The Puranas have described this legend at length. The Bhagwat says on this historical event as follows:

एवं स्तुत स भगवान् वाजिरूपधरो हरिः ।

यजुष्ययातमामानि मुनयेऽदात् प्रसादितः ॥

यजुर्भिरकरोच्छाखा दशपञ्चशतैर्बिभुः ।

जगृहुर्वाजसन्वस्ताः कण्वमथ्यदिनादयः ॥

(Bhagwat, Skandha 12)

'Yajnavalkya offered his prayers to the Sun. The Sun who had been pleased with the prayer, appeared before him, in the form of a horse. He conferred on Yajnavalkya a set of new and white Mantras unknown to Vaishampayan. Yajnavalkya arranged that gift of the Sun delivered from the mouth of the Horse into fifteen hundred sections. Because the Sun had delivered those Mantras to Yajnavalkya through the horse's mouth, this freshly arranged recension came to be called the 'Vajasaneyi' recension. Yajnavalkya propagated this new recension with the help of his disciples like Kanva, Madhyandin and others.'

(Bhagwat 12, 6, 73 and 74)

It was on account of this Puranic legend that the White Yajur Veda came to be imagined as a completely new Veda. Obviously this is not correct as we can see from the texts of both, the old and the new recensions. There is no difference at all between the mantras in the Shukla and the Krishna Yajur Veda. The only perceptible difference is in the matter of pronunciation of the syllables 'ya' and 'sha' as 'ja' and 'kha' and secondly in the variation of the mode of marking the rise and fall of the three Vedic accents by the actions of the arm instead of the head. Yajnavalkya indeed performed a very notable task of separating the mantras from the 'Brahman' which had got mixed into the Krishna Yajur Veda and therefore it was

called 'black', 'dirty' or 'mixed'. But the fact stands despite Yajnavalkya's rearrangement, that the Brahmanas are a part of the Vedas. If we want to have the correct picture of the Vedic nation we cannot overlook the Brahmanas or exclude them from our consideration as not comprising the Vedic literature.

Next to Brahmanas come the 'Aranyakas' which are equally indispensable in the study and interpretation of the Vedas. 'Aranyakas' contain the exposition of the secret of sacrifice. Acharya Sayan explains this word as 'because they are recited and studied in forests they are called "aranyakas".'

अरण्य एव पाठयत्वात् ।

आरण्यकमितीयते ॥

This is not correctly speaking a definition but a description of the word 'aranyaka'. It was a practice of house-holders, after their retirement to forest habitations, to perform sacrifices. Aranyakas contain the descriptions of the sacrifices performed by these residents of forests. The Gopath Brahman and the Bodhayan Dharma-sutra, however, describe these aranyakas as books disclosing the secrets of the 'institution of sacrifice'. The actual contents of the 'aranyaka' literature give us a full idea of the evolution of the institution of the 'Varnashram' and its functions. We also find a scientific analysis and explanations of the 'institution of sacrifice' in these aranyakas.

Next to 'aranyakas' come the 'Upanishads' which in a way form the most valuable portion of the Vedic literature. The Upanishads are so highly esteemed as literature that they are called the 'head of the Veda personality'. There is no doubt that the Upanishads excel everything else in the vast expanse of the Vedic literature, as a unique contribution to the philosophical thoughts ever conceived by men. It therefore becomes unimaginable to set aside the Upanishads in our evaluation of the Vedic life because any such attempt will be not only ridiculous but incomplete.

This is then the extent of the literature which is called the Vedas. The four Vedas, the Brahmanas, the Aranyakas and the Upanishads together make the Vedic literature. There is a volume of auxiliary literature which is commonly called the 'Vedangas'.

Though called parts of the Veda—strictly speaking they are not supplements of Vedic literature and yet are indispensable for the interpretation and understanding of the Vedas. And for one who wants to study the life as it is reflected in the Vedas he cannot but take help of these ancillary chapters on Vedic literature. How many arts and sciences should a man desirous to acquire knowledge learn? It is recommended that a Brahman ought to study these six auxiliaries of the Vedas before he enters into the vast expanse of the Vedic ocean. These Vedangas which are six in number, are, as if it were steps in aid, or guides, for the understanding of the Vedas. Without sound acquaintance with these prerequisite auxiliaries, it is not at all easy to know the Vedas.

The six Vedangas are 'Siksha', 'Kalpa', 'Vyakaran', 'Nirukta', 'Jyotish' and 'Chhanda'.

'Shiksha' is a science of phonetics. It is a matter of surprise and pride that as early as the Vedic days, the science had been thoroughly evolved. Sanskrit which is a so perfect language as no other is, displays the capacity to represent every sound which that tiny organ of the human being called the 'mouth' can articulate. The Vedic linguists analysed all the sounds, their shades, their combinations and compounds, and devised symbols to represent every original and distinct phone produced by the mouth. These symbols were then classified into five categories according to their sources in the mouth. It is not intended to digress here upon the discovery of the Sanskrit 'Varnamala' which is also called the 'Aksharmala' or the alphabets. It will however be interesting to note here that like the 'Aksharmala' a rosary which contains fifty-one beads, the 'Aksharmala' of Sanskrit language has fifty-one basic phones. With twenty-five beads or the Aksharas meaning the fundamental or unchanging sounds on each side, there is the word 'Om' in the centre, which is called the Merumani. His Holiness the present Sri Shankaracharya of Kamakoti Peeth explains the significance of the word 'Om' in a very marvellous manner. He says that this one word symbolises the manifestation of this visible universe. The word which has the first syllable 'A' requires the mouth to be opened wide. That represents the start or the beginning of the creation out of the silent infinite reality. When the mouth

is opened you see the whole universe in the cavity of the mouth as Arjuna saw the sight of the cosmic personality—the 'Vishwarup' in the 11th chapter of the Gita. Lord Krishna had bestowed on Arjuna the divine sight to perceive the whole illusion of the 'universe' in his opened mouth. When this mouth shuts the 'universe' is screened or dissolved, and the sight disappears in one eternal silence. Try to pronounce the last syllable 'M' in 'Om' and you will realise that you have to close the mouth. This is the process of the manifestation of the universe and its devolution represented by the word 'Om' in pronouncing which you open the mouth for 'A', a second and close it with 'M' the next moment. Such is the mystical significance of this sacred word in Bharatiya thought.

Now we shall present briefly the claim of the Aryas to have discovered and formulated the alphabets and incidentally the science of language first before any other race had done it. In fact this 'Aksharamala' which the Aryas discovered exists intact throughout the whole of the East whether it is China, Japan, Burma, Indonesia and all other eastern countries. It is our claim that not only the Eastern hemisphere but even the West has borrowed the 'basic' phones and words from the Aryas.

The Persian script starts with 'Alaf', 'Be', etc., from which the Greeks borrowed 'Alpha', 'Beta', etc. The Persians call their script as Alphaz and the Greeks call it 'Alphabets'. But how did these symbols and their phones go to the Middle East and to the Greek country? Here is an explanation.

In Sanskrit grammar Panini classified all the phones into two categories calling them as 'Ach' and 'Hal' meaning vowels and consonants. The first class comprises the vowels a, aa, e, etc. and the second class comprises the consonants from ka to ksha. So the whole series of the symbols start from 'a' and end with 'ksha'. Therefore it is called 'Aksha' meaning from 'a to ksha'. It is a chain of words beginning with 'a' and ending with 'ksha'. The last symbol 'jna' means 'knowledge', and 'knower'. So 'Akshajna' means one who knows everything from 'a to ksha'. In Sanskrit grammar the vowels are called 'ach' and the consonants 'hal': both together, Panini calls them as 'al'. This 'al', comprising all the phones and displaying all their symbols while travelling to Persia became 'Alaf' and in its further lap

of journey to Greece' it became 'Alpha'. It will thus be seen that the claim of Aryas in having lent to the world the Alpha bets like the numerals can be indisputably proved.

There is one other distinct feature of the Sanskrit pronunciations. The words change their meaning according to accents. The Vedic grammarians classified accents in three categories and tied them down with the symbols and their meanings. It was on account of this well-organised science of phonetics and their symbols that we have been fortunate in inheriting the great legacy of the Vedas, whereas no other race on the globe has anything so ancient as recorded literature.

Every Veda had its independent supplement of the 'Shiksha'. Unfortunately all are lost today except those of Yajnavalkya on Shukla Yajur Veda, of Narad on Sam Veda, and of Mandukya on Atharva Veda. There is no escape but to resort to Panini's 'Shiksha' for the study of Rig-Veda.

The second supplement is called the Kalpsutras. Kalp connotes procedure, rules and the logic, and sutra means a brave condensation of any proposition. 'Kalpsutra' is considered to be more intimately connected with the routine life of the Hindu people as a compendium of information regarding all sorts of casual and routine functions and obligations, right since the Vedic times to the present age. They regulate the routine and direct the occasional and ceremonious rites and rituals to be performed by an individual in a house-hold. All the functions and obligations required by the code and conventions of the Vedic people, all the ceremonies and sacraments from before the birth, that is from the conception, right upto the death and post-death, all the vows and social customs are detailed in the Kalpsutras. Without a proper study of the sutra literature one cannot get a complete picture of the life which a Vedic Hindu lives. The Kalpsutras are four in number: 'Shraut', 'Grihya', 'Dharma' and 'Shulba'.

Those sutras which explain and clarify the prescriptions and procedures in the performance of a Vedic sacrifice are called Shraut Sutras. The Grihya Sutras as the name suggests lay down all the rites, rituals and obligations to be performed by a house-holder in regard to an individual from the time of conception in the embryo right upto the final offering of rice-

balls to the dead. The 'Dharmasutras', because of their vast jurisdiction are very important in the study of Hindu sociology. The word 'dharma' really means the law which should govern the life of a man. The English term 'religion' is too narrow to express fully the connotation of the word 'dharma'. Sanskrit 'dharma' does include the sense conveyed by the term 'religion' but over and above that it also deals with a vaster field of secular social relations and obligations of an individual. The king and his subjects in the kingdom, the objectives of an individual, the economics of a society and the welfare of the nation, the relation of an individual in different stages of life with the house-hold and the society outside, the consideration of the social, political and inter-national duties, rights and obligations, the responsibilities of individuals belonging to different stages of life and castes (Varna and Jati), in short, everything that governs the secular life of an individual with special emphasis on his inescapable obligations as a member of the nation, etc., etc., are the subjects of the 'Dharmasutras'.

The 'Shulba Sutras' belong to an interesting branch which instructs a student in the erection of a pandal for a sacrifice, the construction of the sacrificial altar, etc. This branch indeed presumes a preliminary knowledge of geometry and algebra according to Hindu mathematics. There is no doubt that the origin of geometry and algebra has to be traced to these 'Shulba Sutras' of the Vedic literature. Thus these four auxiliary guides are indispensable for the study of the Vedas.

The third Vedanga is called the 'Vyakaran'—the grammar of the Vedas. In the Vedic terminology grammar was called 'Pratisakhya' for the fact that every Vedic branch had its own particular and peculiar grammar. But of the so many 'Pratisakhya's' only six are extant today all other being lost and forgotten.

The fourth supplement is the Nirukta. There is a Vedic lexicon known by the name of 'Nighantu' which is an exhaustive dictionary of Vedic words and terms. Yaskacharya wrote his commentary on this Vedic Nighantu which he called 'Nirukta' meaning 'everything said without any expectation left behind'. This is the solitary Nirukta which is available today, though there are references of so many of them which are lost,

Many were the Niruktas going under the names of Aupamanvav, Gargya, Agrayan, Shakpurni, Aurnavabha, Taitiki, Galav, Sthaulashthivi, Kraushthiki, Kathakya and others. Yaska refers besides these names to some other authors and commentators on the Vedic words by the general terms, as others, 'acharyas', etc. It has therefore to be presumed that in the days of Yaska there were so many schools of the interpretation of the Vedas known as 'Adhidevat', 'Adhyatma' 'Akhyansamaya', 'Aitihasik' (historical), 'Naidan', 'Nairukta', 'Pari-vrajak', 'Purva-Yajnik', 'Yajnik', etc. All these are categorically and clearly mentioned by the Great Yaska in his unique contribution on the strength of which we must accept the existence of those numerous authors and schools. Dr. Ketkar has stated that there are only two sources available to gather the real meaning of the Vedas. This is very correct. The Vedic stories and the Vedic words are indeed such a vast ocean on the shores of which we can gather the pebbles of real truth. But it is not permissible to put random meanings on the words used in the Vedas. One cannot brush aside the great commentaries called the Niruktas while interpreting the Vedic events and words. The Nirukta deals mainly with four aspects of a word—the combination of the Varnas (letters), their transformation, their transposition, their deletion or disappearance and the roots and meanings of those words. There is indeed a slight difference between etymology—'Vyutpatti'—of words, and their history i.e., 'Nirukta'. Etymology informs only the root of the word, whereas 'Nirukta' deals with everything that can be said about that word.

There has been a wrong impression about the greatest Lexicographer-Commentator, Yaska, ever known to human kind in the field of literature. From the text of the Nirukta itself, it can be inferred that there were two preceptors known as Kautsa and Yaska, the propagators of two different schools of Vedic studies. Acharya Kautsa was the leader of the school which held that 'the Vedas being the mantras it was enough to recite them as mantras and that would secure all the benefits and blessings.' It may be recollected that Kalidas mentions one Kautsa in his Raghuvansha. Whether that Kautsa, the disciple

of Varatantu as mentioned by Kalidas, was the same as this Vedic Kautsa, opinion is yet divided amongst scholars. But about Yaska there is no such doubt. This Yaska maintains that 'one who chants the Vedas without knowing their meaning is indeed a pillar bearing a burden.' Yaska however was not merely an exegete (Arthavadi). Even though he attached all importance to the meanings of the mantras, he did not deprecate the significance or the necessity of committing the Vedas to memory and the indispensability of pronouncing the Vedic words with proper accents. Yaska was, to say correctly, one who gave equal importance to the words of the mantras and their meanings. He was indeed the upholder of the value of the mantras and their meanings also; and because of this his faith, his work got such an esteemed place in the Vedic studies. Yaska stands as the most helpful person to Vedic students with his ever-burning torch which throws light on every word and expression in the Vedas.

The next indispensable supplement is the 'Jyotish'—astronomy. When it is accepted that the Vedic texts are meant to be used in the ritual of the 'sacrifices', it becomes necessary for the priests to know correctly when the sacrifices have to be performed. Thus an up-to-date knowledge of the constellations, conjunctions, auspicious moments, days, sunrises, sunsets, weeks, months and seasons, etc., was essential for a Vedic priest who had to advise his patron on the course of sacrifices which were routine, periodical and seasonal. It is astounding to note that the Vedic researches into the vast space overhead with myriads of stars, constellations, planets, comets, meteors, etc., in and beyond the Solar system had already discovered almost all the fundamentals which are to this day acknowledged by our modern science of astronomy. Without the help of any modern instruments the Vedic seers saw through the skies so correctly and established the theories about the regularity of movements of the planets and constellations, their relations, with the Sun on the one hand and the Earth on the other and the rules and conditions of recurrence of Solar and Lunar eclipses, etc. It is a fascinating fact that the Vedic teachers should have gathered so much knowledge of the skies and the stars merely on the strength of the visual observation. One wonders if they had

any type of mechanical and instrumental aids to read and study the motions and relations of the heavenly bodies at such astronomical distances with such mathematical precision. Only two books on the Vedic astronomy by the Great Acharya Lagadha have come to our hands. It is not known if there were other treatises on astronomy, as on grammar, etc. The two volumes of Lagadha deal with the problems concerning the sacrifices, one on the Rig-Veda and the other on the Yajur-Veda.

The sixth and the last auxiliary in the studies of the Vedas is the prosody called 'Chhanda'. The whole of the Vedic mantra literature is in the form of poetry. The Vedic language is governed very strictly by rules of accents and emphasis which change the meanings of words. Without a thorough knowledge therefore of the rules of these accents and phones as well as the science of Vedic prosody, it is impossible to proceed with the study of the Vedas. This supplement is called the 'Chhanda' and was produced to fulfil the need of instruction in the art and science of phonetics and metrical composition of the Vedic mantras.

There is a considerable literature on this science of prosody. Even in the supplement of grammar of the Rig-Veda by Shaunaka there is noteworthy discussion on this subject. The volume on the 'Chhandonukramani' of course deals with this subject at length. But the only authoritative and substantive treatise on the subject is the 'Chhanda-shastra' by the Sage Pingala. There is no other work so full and so perfect about the subject of Vedic prosody even upto this day.

Having briefly placed before the readers these indispensable supplements called the Vedangas for the understanding of the Vedic literature, we will now proceed with the subject proper namely, the concept of the nation in the Vedic times. From the very nature and scope of the section called the Kalpsutras, we shall have to depend more upon the information that can be gathered from them, though of course to have a complete and comprehensive glimpse of the Vedic nation one has necessarily to refer to all the six sections more or less.

For a correct vista of the nation one must look through the windows which the Vedic literature opens for us. But there seems to be a growing deprecable tendency nowadays among the

Vedic scholars to first fix their general notions and then gather evidence and references to support their theories. They do not even hesitate to change what apparently looks like the natural course of history by twisting the meanings of simple words pulling them out of their contexts. By this method in fact anything can be shown to be proved from any literature.

We have already stated it as a fundamental truth that unless we find out and determine the character and spirit of our nationhood, discover the ways and means, the faith and the practice by which, it rose to the glorious heights, and then diagnose the causes of its decline, we shall not be able to resurrect or rebuild it. If the diagnosis of the causes of the rise and fall of a nation be faulty and unhistorical, it is logical that the conclusions drawn from such a fallacious study will be misleading with the result that the course and planning for its rejuvenation will also be fruitless. Those who really desire to have a correct vision of the Vedic nation, must therefore be far away from such methods undeserving in true and honest students of history and look into the literature itself to gather the reflections. Such sincere and impartial search for truth will startle the scholars with very captivating revelations about the sparkling spirit of the Vedic nationhood. Let us now turn to those golden pages of the glorious saga of the Vedic life.

CHAPTER XVI

CONCEPT OF THE MOTHERLAND

WE have tried so far to show that the Vedic nation was quite accomplished and highly civilised from all points which make a nation perfect. A nation to be so adjudged must exhibit unbounded spirit of patriotism which may otherwise be described as unadulterated devotion to the motherland. The land whose rivers and fields nourish the man, the land for which generations of forefathers have fought and died, the land whose every nook and corner, hill and dale, any mountain or a molecule of earth, reminds a sound heart of the whole history of the race, virtually stands in the relation of Mother to the man. The finest pieces in literatures of the world will be found to be those which sing of the songs of glory and honour of the Motherland. Whether it is Shakespeare, or Joseph Mazini, whether it is Scott or Ernst Arndt, whether it is a Vedic sage or a Communist Cominformist, it is the same feeling of unique love and devotion which inspires the great poets to sing the songs, and the heroes to fight for the honour of their Motherland. There is no period of the known histories of civilised nations which has not at some time or the other become a glowing illustration of this extra-ordinary sentiment of nationalism. For this one sentiment of patriotism many a nation, races and individuals have sacrificed their all leaving behind only a blazing trail of thrilling memories. This wonderful spirit has, on so many occasions, inspired innumerable souls to lay aside their beat of mundane pleasures and passions to rush to the battle-fields or pass through incalculable ordeals for the defence of the Motherland and the preservation of her honour. It is indeed a riddle why an individual should offer to undergo such inhuman tortures scorching his dear flesh and sacrificing his precious life simply for the sake of some abstract notion of love and loyalty to the sod of earth which he calls his Motherland. It is still greater an enigma from where and how that spirit and sentiment of the Soul boils up to such a degree of self-sacrifice. There was an American Natham Hale

who during the War of Independence exclaimed: 'I regret that I have but one life to lose for my country.' Swami Vivekananda, the Hindu monk, used always to say that he would ever pray for a thousand lives to serve his Motherland.

The spirit of patriotism is common to all races of mankind. It was not unknown to our Vedic forefathers also. Rather it is proper to say that from them we have inherited this sentiment and devotion to the Motherland. Dr. Bernard Joseph observes: 'Love of homeland, from time immemorial, through Sanskrit literature, homeland more sacred than heaven itself, pilgrimage, chosen land. For the Hindus, at any rate, their country has been glorified into an object of worship.' (*Nationality, Its Nature and Problems*, p. 230).

The spirit of patriotism is common to all the nations. It was intensely present in Bharat in the Vedic days, as it was in other contemporary nations too. But a little deeper consideration of the concepts of notions of love and loyalty to their lands will disclose a fundamental difference and distinction between the ideals of Bharat and those of other countries. The sons of other lands no doubt love their country as the father or motherland. At the most they consider her to be their sacred land. Their love and devotion to the Motherland is therefore governed by the factors of the births and deaths of their forefathers, the association of their race, with the land and by the fact that the land of their birth happens to be also the land of birth of their Prophet and the religion preached by him. This is in truth the origin and nature of the sentiment of patriotism in the different peoples of different nations on the globe. It is indeed present among the Bharatiya people also; but there is something more of fundamental value which is lacking in other nations. The Hindus also love Bharat as Motherland, as a sacred land; and yet more as a Karma-bhumi which means the land of action. Patriotism is indeed noble. Yet it is merely a sentiment of gratefulness towards the land which gives birth and brings up an individual. It is a sentiment born out of some selfishness and sensibility, out of a feeling of gratitude towards the Mother. It is born and is governed by the facts of history and the accidents of birth and as such is liable to shifting and changes, with the course of history. If we analyse the

love and loyalty of the present-day Americans towards their country, we shall witness strange phenomenon. The ancestors of the present-day Americans migrated from a number of European countries. But the present descendants have no feeling for the land of their forefathers and all their love and loyalty are centred in their present land. History has brought a change in the spirit of their patriotism and the objects of their loyalties. That is bound to happen in cases which are governed by historical and natural facts and not by principles. In the case of the Bharatiya people, however, one cannot see or even imagine such a conversion in the concept of the nationhood or the notions of patriotism. There is no fear of the concept being changed as long as the essence of the Bharatiya thought on which the whole life is nourished remains unchanged. The concept of motherland and fatherland are susceptible to change with the change of the motherland but in the case of the Bharatiyas who consider their country as the place to perform penance and action, there can never be any change in their outlook and spirit. This intensive devotion to the Motherland, almost the deification of every stone and atom of her soil, rivers and mountains, has become an indivisible element of the concept of nationhood of the Bharatiya people. It is their very 'ego' and sap of the life. Love of the Motherland, and the sacred land, are indeed very important factors in the make-up of the faith of an individual; but they are so much interdependent with the history which is ever-changing. In the comprehension of the Bharatiya people they have added one more eternal idea which is independent of the historical processes. It is the faith that Bharat is the land of action and penance. The Bharatiya seers coined a very meaningful word to express this concept which is one of the few cardinal principles governing the life of a Hindu, and on which the whole of their unchallenged philosophy has been developed. It is on that account that the Mother Bharat has become not merely a land to be loved and honoured but to be worshipped as the Mother. Dr. Bernard is perfectly right in his observations that the Hindus consider their Motherland as the greatest icon to be worshipped.

It may be here asked how does the mere accident of a birth in a land make the individual any way great or small. It can certainly not be said that wisdom and prowess are bestowed only on those who are born in Bharat and that all other people are denied these special favours. Admitting this fact and allowing the truth that many a gem have been indeed born in other lands who have become ornaments of humanity, nevertheless, it is our claim that in spite of all the distinctions which these noble souls have earned by their merits, there is yet one rare consideration on which a Bharatiya stands far above them. The ideals which were reared up in Bharat have been adjudged by Bharatiya philosophers and prophetic seers to have some very far-reaching and intimate relation with the evolution of the biological life, and granted that knowledge, the realisation of the ultimate truth. It is on that account that they have classified the globe in two categories, namely, Bharat as the Karma-bhumi and the rest of the world as the Bhog-bhumi meaning the region of enjoyment and indulgence in pleasures and passions of the flesh and mind. All our legendary literature harps ceaselessly on this one conviction that Bharat is the land of performing meritorious deeds and penance and all others are merely places where people get submerged in pleasures.

Justice Woodroff in his book *Is India Civilised?* (p. 115) observes: 'Distinguished thinker Prof. Lowes Dickinson, in an essay which seeks with justice to define the character of Indian civilisation, profoundly remarks that it is so unique that the contrast is not so much between East and West as between India and the rest of the world. Thus India stands for something which distinguished it from all other peoples, as such she calls herself a Karma-bhumi as opposed to Bhog-bhumi of all other people. For this she has been wonderfully preserved until today. Even now we can see the life of thousands of years ago.'

What has this concept of Motherland to do in regard to the subject under consideration? If someone asks such a question, we have to say that it is not irrelevant. The love of Motherland is rooted in the self-same sentiments and convictions which like other people the Hindus have inherited from their forefathers.

It is now our purpose to show that this love of the Mother Bharat was as extant in the Vedic days as it is witnessed today. It is indeed a solacing thought that the Vedic ancestors of the present Bharatiya people had the sentiment of patriotism and the love of the Mother in as great and uncompromising a degree as in the present times, if not more. The Mother Earth has been addressed in the 10th Mandal in a strange manner on a peculiar occasion. It is the burial ceremony of a Vedic person. The person is referred to be buried here, but that should not lead us to believe that the Vedic Aryas buried their dead. For there are other descriptions in the same tone in which the fire has been asked to take care of the dead relative. The verses say:

उप सर्प मातरं भूमिं एतां उरुऽव्यचसं पृथिवीं सुऽशेषाम् ।

ऊर्णेऽम्रदाः युवतिः दक्षिणाऽवते एषा त्वा पातु निऽकृते उपऽस्थात् ॥

उत् श्वस्व पृथिवि मा नि बाधथाः सुऽउपायना अस्मै भव

सुउपवधना । माता पुत्रं यथा सिन्धु अमि एनं भूमे ऊर्णहि ॥

‘May you now go to the auspicious and wide Earth. It is this soft and velvety Earth, which is ever young, will always give you shelter and protection. O Mother Earth, may you support this our relative; do not injure the dead; may you look to his comforts and wants; and may you always console him; as a mother wraps her child in her lap; may you also cover this dead.’ (Rig-Veda 10-18-10 and 11).

We have given above a passage which expresses the sentiments of the Vedic people in regard to the Mother earth, which they had named as Bharati. They had identified themselves as the sons of the Mother Bharati; they called themselves as the Bharati Praja; their language they named as Bharati Vani, their learning as Bharati Vidya. So much ideological identity with the land of birth of their fathers and forefathers and themselves had come to be established by the days of the Rig-Veda itself. But the real flowering of the ideal of Motherland and the unbounded patriotism and loyalty to her is evinced in the Atharva-Veda. The concept of Motherland and the nationhood of the Bharatiya people is elaborately and finely expounded in the ‘hymn of the Earth’ which occurs in the

Shaunak recension. The first hymn of the 12th Kāṇḍa contains 63 verses which are all bubbling with the robust sentiment of patriotism and an indomitable spirit of loyalty to the Mother. It is a high song of love of the mother which rises like a fountain from the heart of the poet. The whole hymn deserves to be studied and committed to memory. We shall have of course to refer to so many verses from the hymn, as they make a beautiful exposition of the relation of man to his motherland.

The hymn opens with the golden words which can stand as a fitting motto, more fittingly for the modern idealists of one-world. The poet bows down to his Mother saying: 'Motherland, Son, I am of the Mother Earth.' With this sentiment of devotion of a son to his Mother, the poet is grieved at the thought that he is required to scratch the earth, to dig in her belly, to plough the fields, and thus cause so much injury to her, for the sake of getting a morsel of food. Being helpless he has to do all that, but his mind is very much pained and therefore he says:

यत् ते भूमे विखनामि क्षिप्रं तदपि रोहतु ।

मा ते मर्म विमृष्वरि मा ते हृत्पदमर्पिपम् ॥

इन्द्रो यां ऋक् आत्मने न मित्रां शचीपतिः ।

सा नोभूमिर्विस्तृजतां माता पुत्राय मे पयः ॥

'O Land! Wherever I create cavities, may they soon be filled up; may I not cause any injury on thy bosom: nor should I occasion any grief in your heart. Lord Indra made this earth safe from all enemies; may that Land—my Mother flow with nourishing milk for me.' (Atharva-Veda 12-1 . . .).

In the modern Bharat the loveliest and the most popular song of the mother which has become a national anthem in the days of struggle for freedom is the *Salute to the Mother* by Bankim Chandra Chatterjee. He has given some realistic and some highly sentimental expressions which reflect the feelings of a Bharatiya towards his Motherland. If we compare this, once most captivating song of the Mother with the Vedic prayer in the Atharva-Veda, one will have to admit that the Vedic prayer is much more emphatic and heart-stirring than Bankim's, without meaning the least disrespect to the latter.

Is it not startling to note that the concepts of Motherland and nationhood were finely engraved in the hearts of the Bharatiya people even in those early days? Here is the prayer of the Vedic Sage:

'My Motherland! which has four boundaries, where the peasant ploughs his fields to produce corns, the land which bears all the living creatures by providing them with the necessities of life, may that our land enrich us with cattle and corn! My Mother, who bears all sorts of herbs and creepers possessing numerous potent and medicinal essences, may she ever be pleased with us to the highest degree. The Motherland, which is rich with waters of seas and rivers, flowing in perennial streams, which always feed and nourish us with all what the farmers procure from her bosoms! this Mother Earth which sustains the universe, which is a treasure house of all sorts of wealths, whose bosom shines with gold, the never-failing shelter of mankind, which harbours fire, is the abode of Lord Indra, and other godheads strong like bulls, may she, our Motherland, enrich us with all sorts of possessions! O Motherland, the beloved wife of the Rains, you who offer rice and barley to the farmers who plough your fields, you who get intoxicated with rains which make you splendourous with thy green fields, we bow down to you! May you, O Mother, who are holding rich treasures of all that is useful in a household, gold, jewels, metals and such other sorts of different wealths, may you the giver of all coveted stores be pleased with us and confer on us all kinds of prosperity and wealths.' (Atharva-Veda 12-1).

यस्याश्वतसः प्रदिशः पृथिव्या यस्यामन्नं कृष्टयः सम्बभूवुः ।

या बिभर्ति बहुधा प्राणदेजत् सा नो भूमिः गोष्वप्यन्ने दधातु ॥

नानावीर्या औषधीर्या बिभर्ति पृथिवी नः प्रथतां राध्यताम् ।

यस्यां समुद्र उत सिन्धुरापो यस्यामन्नं कृष्टयः सम्बभूवुः ॥

यस्यामिदं जिन्वति प्राणदेजत् सा नो भूमिः पूर्वपेये दधातु ॥

विश्वंभरा वसुधानी प्रतिष्ठा हिरण्यवक्षा जगतो निशेवनी ।

वैश्वानरं बिभ्रती भूमिरग्निमिन्द्र ऋषभाद्रविणे नो दधातु ॥

यस्यामन्नं ग्रीहियवौ यस्या इमाः पञ्चकृष्टयः ।

भूम्यै पञ्चम्यपन्नयै नमोऽस्तु वर्षमेदसे ॥

निधिं भिन्नती बहुधा गुहावसु मणिं हिरण्यं पृथिवी ददातु मे ।

वसूनि नो वसुदारासमाना देवी दधातु सुमनस्यमाना ॥

Let us ask what is at the bottom of this love and loyalty to the Motherland? Surely the sole reason is that the land feeds us and sustains our life. Poor or rich, humanity is bound to Mother Earth who feeds the life that crawls on her surface. It has to be seen if there would be any life, at all in places and lands which are totally dead producing nothing on which living animals or vegetation can subsist. There is no doubt that these are places where life does not grow : and therefore there would hardly be any people who would call such an un-productive and barren land as their mother. The richer the fertility of the land, the greater the love, pride and loyalty of the people living on her bosom. Life is associated with histories of the ancestors who developed the lands, lived on it, and claimed her as their Mother. They fought to defend her borders and preserve the civilisations reared on her from the attacks of alien people. That is how the sentiment of patriotism grows in the hearts of nationals. They associate every part of the land and every field in it, rivers, mountains, battle-fields with the memories of their forefathers. The mention of any of them brings to their minds the golden past of their forefathers. Mention the name of Ayodhya, and the recollection of the immortal ideal of Bharatiya culture and civilisation, Rama, stands before the Hindu mind. Go to Dwaraka, which has been described literally to be of gold, revives the memories of another perfect incarnation which humanity has produced in the person of Lord Krishna who delivered the message of 'life divine'. Why go to the prehistoric past, nearer our times we find that every nook and corner of this vast land has been associated with the glories and greatness of this one or that great stalwart. It is the cumulative effect of pride and inheritance that throbs the hearts of nationals. That is at the root of the love of Motherland. Our Vedic ancestors were not wanting in this sentiment and spirit of patriotism. The Vedic Sage goes on pouring his heart as follows:

'This is my Motherland, where in ancient times my forefathers performed great miracles of exploits: it was here in

this land that the divine beings vanquished the demonic devils; this my Motherland which is a happy and safe abode of all animals like the cow and the horse and all kinds of fowls and birds, may she shower on us good luck and great prowess; this is my Motherland in which the two Ashvins, the great Vishnu and Indra, the husband of Shachi, performed great miracles; O Mother, those who hate us, those who march with armies to overpower us, those who think evil of us in their minds, and those who desire our death and destruction, may you crush them to pieces; it is this my Motherland on whose lap my forefathers, the great Rishis, performed sacrifices, penances, and sang songs in the seven sessions.' (Atharva-Veda 12-15-10-14-39).

यस्यां पूर्वे पूर्वजना विचक्रिरे यस्यां देवा असुरानभ्यवर्तमन् ।
 गवामश्वानां वयसश्च विष्ठा भगं वर्चः पृथिवी नो दधातु ॥
 यामश्विनामविमातां विष्णुर्यस्यां विचक्रमे ।
 इन्द्रो यां चक्र आत्मने न मित्रां शचीपतिः ॥
 योनो द्वेषत् पृथिवि यः पृतन्यात् योऽभिदासान्मनसा यो वधेन ।
 तं नो भूमे रन्धय पूर्वकृत्वरि ॥
 यस्याः पूर्वे भूतकृत ऋषयो गा उदानृचुः ।
 सप्तसत्रेण वेधसो यज्ञेन तपसा सह ॥

How powerfully has this poet rung out the sentiment of patriotism by associating the present life with the memories of the past! It is in the untarnished recollection of the great glories and exploits of the forefathers that the hope of building a shining future is enshrined. If this is not patriotism and the spirit of nationhood, we fail to understand what else makes it?

It has to be well understood that in the Bharatiya mind the whole complex of the ritualistic and cultural life of the society is inseparably bound up with the concept of the Motherland. The association of the idea of civilisation with the Motherland is interdependent in that, it is the belief of the Bharatiya people that all the Vedic rites and rituals must be performed in this sacred land to be efficacious. A legend goes that King Bali who ruled the heavens could not perform the horse-sacrifice in heaven and had to descend to the country to the

north of Narmada. The significance of this legend mentioned in the 8th Skandha of the Bhagwat Puran has to be grasped in the light of the abovementioned conviction. Bharat is the Karma-bhumi par excellence. It is the conviction of the Hindus that the Creator has gifted this land to the Hindus for the performance of religious rituals and sacrifices which makes the relation of the Bharat Bhumi something more than merely the land of enjoyment and birth. Lord Indra exclaims:

अहं भूमि मददामायै ।

'It is I who have given this land to the Vedic Aryas.' It is in consonance with this faith that Shri Aravind observes:

'It is for the Dharma and by the Dharma that India exists.' It will be seen that the spirit and the sentiment which the Hindus hold dear right up to now is a legacy from the Vedic past. The sage in the Atharva-Veda who has given that exquisite hymn of the Mother Earth says:

'It is truth, hard Brahmacharya, initiation, penance, the Veda and the sacrifice all of which sustain this Earth. May that land which governs our past and guides our future bestow happiness on us. We worship the land in which the priests arrange altars where they perform sacrifices and where the ascetics chant mantras, and offer oblations to the fire; may that land shower happiness on us. The Earth indeed stands on the support of the law and Dharma.' (Atharva-Veda 12-17).

The hymns which have been so far cited should leave no doubt about the nature of the love and loyalty of the Hindus towards their motherland right from the days of the Vedas. But look here to some fine examples which illustrate how in those early days the concept of Motherland and the idea of nationhood had been fully evolved.

'We shall speak always well of Thee O Mother, whether we are in villages, or forests, whether in assemblies or on battle-fields, anywhere where men meet together, we shall think with one mind and speak well of you.' (14)

सत्यं बृहदतमुग्रं वीक्षा तपो ब्रह्म यज्ञः पृथिवीं धारयन्ति ।

सा नो भूतस्य भव्यस्य पत्न्युरं लोकं पृथिवी नः कृणोतु ॥

यस्यां वेदिं परिगृह्णन्ति भूम्यां यस्यां यज्ञं तन्वते विश्वकर्माणः ।
 यस्यां मीयन्ते स्वरवः पृथिव्या मूर्ध्नाः शुक्रा आहुत्याः पुरस्तात् ॥
 सा नो भूमिर्वर्धयद् वर्धमाना ।
 पृथिवीं धर्मेणा धृताम् ॥
 ये ग्रामा यदरण्यं याः सभा अधिभूम्याम् ।
 ये संग्रामा समित्तमः तासु चारु वदेम ते ॥
 मानः पश्चान्मा पुरस्तान्नुदिष्ठामोत्तरादधरादुत् ।
 स्वस्ति भूमे नो भव मा विदन् परिपन्थिनो वरीयो भावमाबधम् ॥

‘O Mother, let not any one strike at us either in the back or in the front, from above or from below: may you do good to me always. Ward off all the thieves, robbers and violent attackers; and may you send them away from me!’ (32)

‘O Mother, let all thy places be completely free from diseases, fear and decay. Make us long-lived, and alert always, keep us fit in our bodies and minds ready to undergo any sacrifices for you with the stakes of our heads on our palms.’ (62)

‘O Mother Earth, the land on which our heroes shout heroically and dance in the battle-fields, where the clash of weapons and the beating of the battle-drums rise high, may that Motherland destroy all our enemies, set them on their flight to run away and make us absolutely free of enemies like a smooth path free of thorns.’ (41)

‘Here I am ready to undergo all and any hardships for the sake of my Motherland, for the sake of relieving her of her sorrows and griefs! I care not when and what hardships I have to face for the love and loyalty to Motherland.’ (54)

‘I swear, I will always speak what is sweet about my Motherland, and what is good for my Motherland; I vow I will do all that is necessary for the sake of my Motherland. I determine to become strong and intelligent and with my sparkling prowess I will destroy the enemies who are fleeing and exploiting my Motherland.’ (50)

‘O Motherland, may you always shower blessings on me and may you keep me safe and steady and well established in you.’ (63)

Such are the inspiring thoughts of the Vedic people which express their sentiments towards their Motherland in so unmistakable a language. What other nation has ever shown so thorough a spirit of nationhood and so high a concept of Motherland in so remote a period as pre-historic as the Vedic age ?

CHAPTER XVII

STRUCTURE OF VEDIC SOCIETY

WHAT was the concept of nationhood in the Vedas? If by nationhood we understand a compact and well-defined society which is determined and regulated by the unities, then indeed the people whose life is reflected in the Vedas can be legitimately described as a nation. The people have been in various places called the Panch Janas plainly meaning the five communities. There is another significant term—'Janasya Gopah'—which recurs in the Rig-Veda in the sense of the 'defender of the community'. There are numerous mentions of the term 'Bharat-Jana'. Dr. Hoffkins suggests that the word 'Jana' should be understood to mean 'a village'. He, however, does not give any reason why the word should be so interpreted discarding its usual common sense. Dr. Ketkar while explaining the word 'Bharat-Jana' puts another meaning on it. By Bharat-Jana he wants us to understand the 'hordes of people entering Bharat'. Hoffkins' interpretation has no basis. Dr. Ketkar's suggestion is also equally unwarranted. The word Jana has all throughout been understood in the sense of 'people'. There is an equivalent word, namely, 'vish'. This word 'vish' which recurs very often in the Rig-Veda as well as in the Taittiriya and the Atharva-Veda almost all times means the 'nation'. The word 'Rashtra' itself is not very uncommon in the Vedic literature. There may be some uses of this word 'Rashtra' in the sense of a kingdom but there are many places in which it means a nation. Dr. Ketkar's insistence that the word means 'kingdom' only is not correct.

The one most effective unity which brings together the people into a compact society deserving to be called a nation, is a common government. The concept of nationhood minus the consideration of government is meaningless. But at the same time it must be understood that a nation is something larger than the idea of a kingdom or a state.

'Rashtra' in the Vedic use meant a society which was formed and united by a number of ties which are in modern terminology called the unities. The difference between the concepts of a nation and a state can be traced even in the Vedic literature in the words Rashtra and Rajya. There is no reason to suppose that the word Rashtra has not been used in the Vedas in the sense of nation denoting such a united society. In the Taittiriya it is said:

आब्रह्मन् ब्राह्मणो ब्रह्मवर्चसी जायताम् ।

'Let there be born in this nation a progeny endowed with the spirit and strength of the Brahmanas.' The relation of 'in this

अस्मिन् राष्ट्रे ।

nation' has to be necessarily established with 'self', i.e., in 'our'. In the Atharva-Veda in all places the word 'Rashtra' has been used to denote a compact and united society. If there are in some places secondary meanings of the word 'Rashtra', they are minor and only incidental.

Coming to the consideration of the objectives and aspirations of the Vedic society, we get a broad idea implicit in the term 'Purushartha'. It means the aspirations of the individual. These individual aspirations have been classified in four categories, namely, 'Dharma', 'Artha', 'Kama', and 'Moksha'. Last of these four is specially considered to be the *summum bonum* to be achieved.

This classification of individual objectives in the above-mentioned four categories may look strange and shocking to a modern mind which has been influenced by materialistic philosophy. 'Kama', i.e., the desires, passions and pleasures are indeed the natural sentiments of men as much as of beasts. To satisfy these brute or animal instincts, man strives to acquire the means. This instrument or means of satisfaction of man's 'Kam' is called 'arth'. Besides these two natural inclinations the other two of Dharma and Moksha are exclusive to man and not shared by beasts and brutes. According to the materialistic philosophy these two, the comforts, and the means to satisfy them are the highest objectives of human achievement. But a little more thought on this urge of man to gather pleasure and to find the means for them will be seen to be not

exclusively human. It is also present with the animal life. It does not therefore deserve to be called an objective only of human beings. Naturally it follows that those philosophies in which more or the only stress is laid upon the fulfilment of these animal instincts become guilty of lowering down man to the level of animals, from which we claim to have risen higher. These two urges cannot therefore be called the covetable objectives of a civilised man. The societies which have not yet risen higher than these animal instincts are dragging the world into the same dangerous state of life resembling the jungle existence of animals.

There is no gainsaying that a human being must get the creature comforts. The question, however, arises as to what should be the measure and limit of the comforts, pleasure and happiness? It is common experience that as a man tries to quench his thirst and satisfy his passion they go on increasing. Greed begets greed. There is never an end to the desires and attachments. Those who are enslaved dream of freedom. Those who are free, and powerful aspire for empires. This they cannot do without enslaving other societies. Even after this is accomplished, a conqueror like Alexander, does not feel satisfied with his conquest of the globe. He weeps and laments that there is nothing else for him to conquer. In short, thirst and hunger of man and the craving for pleasures are endless and insatiable. There is no natural curb on the endeavours to gather the means or a break to the desires. The inevitable result of this boundless ambition and lust of power of a society or a State culminates in the production of such deadly weapons like the hydrogen bombs, missiles and what-not either for a complete supremacy over the human race, failing which, for the total destruction of the obstructing forces. Humanity is thus on the brink between destruction and total slavery. This animal instinct for physical comforts and conquests has to be checked somewhere by someone. How can that be achieved? The Western philosophers are disturbed by this problem of finding out an effective control over this destructive tendency of this nation or that. The social scientists are confounded. What will save humanity from the impending catastrophe? When the great philosophers and sociologists of the Western

world are groping in the dark for finding out a remedy, there is the Bharatiya philosophy, which has, for centuries from the very infancy of humanity, right through the middle ages down to our present times, presented an ideal concept of life which can become a sure and successful remedy.

न जातु कामः कामानामुपभोगेन शाम्यति ।

हविषा कृष्णवर्त्मैव भूय एवाभिवर्धते ॥

In the Bhagwat Puran, King Yayati exclaims: 'Know it from me that passions never get satisfied by enjoyment. It is like trying to extinguish fire by putting fire-wood in it.' It will be recalled that Yayati was a king who in very old age, desired to satisfy his sexual passion. After pursuit of pleasures of sex he came to a bitter conclusion which he has expressed in the above verse. This is not the experience of Yayati only. Almost everyone at some time or the other of his life tumbles on this truth. But the experience of honest men does not make others wise. Man has not learnt at all to restrain his desires and ambitions. It has become impracticable to check this passion of human beings for the gathering of means of happiness by arranging the social and economic orders in the society. The examples of modern democracies, fascism, communism, nazism, some of which have ended in utter failure and some hold a dismal future, are a pointer to the futility of modern devices. Will they be successful, let us ask, by putting some patches on the external wounds if the very flow and current of blood is poisoned and diseased? It is the undercurrent of life which has to be examined and cured. How can that be done? How could these vicious tendencies of human mind be checked? Can culture and effective discipline bridle these animal urges of human mind? The Vedic society had amply succeeded in accomplishing this apparently impossible ideal and it will profit us to know how that was done.

One may rightly ask here if it is ever possible to scorch out these natural animal urges root and seed. Even if it were possible in the case of individuals where the collective human society is concerned such an idea is not merely utopian but absurd and may be undesirable. The problem therefore is not of total liquidation of these instincts but of circumscrib-

ing them, confining them to certain limits, and devising the measures to satisfy them fully to these extents. That is accomplished by the concept of 'duty'—Dharma in the Bharatiya philosophy.

It is this concept of duty which teaches the Bharatiya people to control their desires and passions which are so natural an inheritance of the soul in animal flesh. This belief in 'duty for duty's sake' which the Bharatiya thought and discipline ingrain in an individual from very childhood is called the 'Dharma'. 'Dharma' or the conscience of 'inescapable duty' makes a man of an animal, the other two motives, namely, selfish acquisition and indulgence in sense satisfaction being common to all creatures. It is for this reason that Bharatiya ethics employs a very purposeful word 'Purushartha' meaning the 'objectives of human achievement' and in that also it has placed Dharma as the first target. The highest objective of a Bharatiya is of course the loosening of all bonds and the attainment of complete release from bondage—'Moksha'.

This Bharatiya concept of 'freedom from bondage, the cycle of births and deaths' has become a subject of serious attacks by critics. They say that being purely a personal ideal, it does not help the social organisation or the concept of the nation; rather it turns the loyalties of individuals from the national objectives to personal attainments. This sort of misconception of the idea of 'Moksha' arises out of ignorance of the technical diction of the Vedic and Upanishadic philosophy. It is wrong to suppose that 'Moksha' is something to be enjoyed exclusively by an individual in seclusion or that the soul cuts itself asunder from the whole universe. On the other hand, the most fundamental or the basic concept of the Bharatiya philosophy is the realisation of one's identification with the universe. It is not escapism of any kind but rather a thorough unification with all that is alive or lifeless. This real meaning of 'Moksha' has not even an iota of selfishness in it; rather it teaches an individual to feel with all that is around him. This his identification with the interests of all others prompts him to strive more for their good. In that stage, really speaking, all distinctions of subjective and objective of one's self and of other's vanish. Man looks to every soul, as if it were his

own. Such a blessed large-hearted soul smiles and weeps with others; strives and suffers for others; and is happy or sorrowful for the lot of others and yet personally he is totally unaffected. That indeed is the meaning of 'Moksha', freedom from all considerations of the personal self and its total merging with the life of the universe. When this miracle of total elimination of the notion of self itself is achieved, what remains behind is the unity and identification with the universe, which stage is the golden peak of life to be attained, in the eyes of the Bharatiya people.

This perfect blending of the two objectives, namely, the total detachment of the self-release from bondage—and the good of the society is admired by the Bharatiya ethics as the highest achievement. There is no other social philosophy or ethics produced by any other race which brings about this result in such a fine consummation. 'Moksha', i.e., total elimination, or to use the powerful expression of certain saints, absolute annihilation of the idea and consciousness of the individual self is the most covetable individual goal in Bharatiya thought. It is possible to achieve this by taking up a course of life dictated by that noble sense of inescapable duty which is called the 'Dharma'. What personal pleasures and enjoyments, acquisitions and holdings that can come across without any initiative or effort in between in this course of life an individual is allowed to enjoy or suffer.

This is the correct interpretation of the four-fold objective called 'Purushartha' according to the Hindu ethics. This helps them to abandon, or rise above the animal sensuality which is the legacy of our flesh. If we appraise carefully this well-thought out prescription of the Bharatiya social philosophers to control the animal instincts, if not to uproot them completely, we have to admire their marvellous ingenuity. This grand ideal of loosening of the sense of self has in its own course resulted in engendering the more effective and fruitful principle of the Bharatiya life, namely, the faith in the concept of 'duty' and not 'rights' as the incentive of social action. Unlike other societies a Bharatiya is never taught by his culture and social education to ask what his rights are but to think first of what his duty is and do it unmindful of costs and

consequences, of results good and bad. The inspiration of duty in self-retrospection rather than the provocation of rights arouses a man to suffer and sacrifice in the fulfilment of his responsibilities. The thought of rights on the other hand, incites a craving for advantages, profits and enjoyment of worldly pleasures and the objects of senses calling them creature comforts. The awakening of the sense of duty impels a man to perform his part as well as possible and to suffer in doing that unmindful of the returns or the rights. It is thus that a sense of duty with all the prepondering weight of necessity and sacredness of the idea of sacrifice for the sake of community, became the corner-stone of the structure of Hindu social philosophy. It is in the proper adjustment and fulfilment of the four-fold objective of an individual in the society that the numerous prescriptions, rites and rituals came to be evolved in the passage of time. The whole concept of Purushartha was evolved as if it were a long session of a sacrifice. Every single rite and ritual, sacrament and occasional sacrifice, right from the first conception of life in the embryo in the mother's womb, to the last rite of burning of the deceased and offering of rice-balls to him, everything was calculated to achieve the cumulative objective of the social organisation in a perfect adjustment of the individual happiness and collective bliss. If we examine a little more thoughtfully the significance of every one of these prescriptions and forms, rites and sacraments, brushing aside their superficial appearance and social éclat, we shall surely be convinced that the wise Hindu sociologists have in the guise of these prescriptions given to the worldly householders, everyone of whom is not going to and cannot possibly think of the inner meanings, a course of smooth social behaviour which was destined to lead them to the attainment of full personal contentment within bounds without losing their souls and at the same time helped them to become most useful constituents of the social organisation of which they were parts and parcels. That gives a glimpse of how the ancient social directors devised ways and methods to control the animal instincts and to channelise them with intermittent outlets for exuberance and diversions, mixed with the curbs of periodical vows and 'Vratas', in the forms of sacra-

ments on auspicious occasions, all to achieve the one social destiny. It is in the happy and harmonious compromise of the personal and social objectives wherein lies the excellence of the Hindu social evolution. And while devising all this, mark well, the philosophers never lost sight of their ambition to lift the man from within the animal and raise him to the highest pedestal of a superman of whom there are so many glorious illustrations in the Bharatiya history. It is in this task of resurrection of the divine from the mortal animal coil into which it gets muffled that the distinguishing excellence of the Bharatiya thought lies. The Vedic Sages and the later Law-givers never forgot this one great planned purpose. While prescribing multifarious rites and rituals for days and nights, months and seasons, years and cycles, they always harped on the truth that it was the human element which values most and without which all the sufferings and sacrifices, the rites and rituals would be of no avail.

There is a standing controversy between theologians, moralists and sociologists regarding the values of morals and religious observances. Who is superior, the man who strictly observes and abides by all the directions and demands of the religious faith but violates the simple morals or the man who is spotlessly moralistic but does not observe the religious prescriptions? There is no question for doubt at all. Whatever may be the case with other religious faiths, in the Bharatiya social philosophy a man without morals is considered a brute and there is no religious prescription which would defy or repudiate the accepted concepts of ethics.

These qualifications which go to make a man a man, the simple self-restraints which withhold a man from behaving like an animal, are called 'Ātmagunas', inherent virtues by the Law-giver Gautam. In his Dharma-Sutra 8:21, 'the natural inclination to care for the good and happiness of others as much as of one's own self, forbearance, a mind devoid of any sense of hatred or jealousy of those who are superior in virtues and powers, absolute purity of mind and body, thought and speech, total ease without the least scramble to get anything in life, a mind that always thinks of the auspicious and good all around, that which exhibits the most catholic disposition in every

thought and act, freedom from all desires, a contentment in what has come to the lot with a masterly conduct of never exhibiting one's wants or wagging to get them, total detachment from the pleasures of senses, etc., are listed to be the inherent virtues, which give a dignity to an individual. These are, really speaking, the human qualities which are most aspired even according to the new thinking in terms of perfect manhood. Referring to these qualities the Sage Gautam says:

दया सर्वभूतेषु क्षांतिरनसूया शौचमनायासो मङ्गलमकार्पण्यमस्पृहेति ।

यस्यैते चत्वारिंशत्संस्कारा न च अष्टावात्मगुणाः न स ब्रह्मणस्सायुज्यं सालोक्यं च गच्छति ॥

‘A person who undergoes and performs all the twenty-four sacraments and rites from conception to the last Sapta-Soma, but who is indeed devoid of these basic eight qualities of manhood cannot be said to have a perfect fruitful and complete life. On the other hand, a person who acts upto these virtues, may be, he has only formally observed the religious prescriptions, realises full fruit of his life.’ (Gautam Dharma-Sutra 8, 2 and 23).

केवलाघो भवति केवलादी ।

The Law-giver Vasishtha observes:

‘A man who has forsaken fundamental virtues is also forsaken by the merit of all his knowledge of the Veda and its supplements.’ In substance, therefore, there is not the least doubt in the thought of the Bharatiya sociologists that the unshakable base of the individual and national life is the regard for truth and character. The Rig-Veda in a cryptic and brave utterance declares:

अमेध्यो वै पुरुषो यदनृतं वदति ।

तस्य कनीयः कनीयः एव तेजो भवति श्वः पापीयान् भवति तस्मात्सत्यमेव वदेत् ।

‘A social sinner can never cross the path of truth.’ ‘One who looks to and cares for his own morsel of food to fill his belly feeds only on sins.’ The Shatpath Brahman observes: ‘One who tells lies and one who has no regard for truth can never be an Arya, a sacrificer; his prowess diminishes day-by-day;

he turns into a social sinner everyday; therefore worship the truth.'

Having thus extolled the value of real goodness, regard for truth, character and moral behaviour, our social thinkers sound a caution to those who follow the right path. The Shatpath Brahman warns that it is possible that such a man who is really virtuous, uncompromising in his regard for truth, and of a character of sterling worth, may fall into the pit of self-pride. Pride is the fore-runner of fall. The pilgrim on the path of virtue is therefore warned: 'Let not pride ever enter your heart; from the moment of contamination of pride your fall begins.' The Hindu sociologists recount in clear words the correct steps for the attainment of the dignity of man by a valuable exposition of absolute virtues on the background of duties, and then they do not hesitate to point the red signals declaring the pitfalls. The social structure of the Bharatiya people was erected on the fundamentals of social behaviour and an absolute code of ethical conduct unfettered by the dictates or demands of religious faith. It is in this absolute evaluation of virtues which go to make a social or national life of a people well-knit and free from any type of dogma that the essence and the imperishable strength of the Hindu society lies. It is this character of our social organisation that has enabled it to survive for milleniums under the stress and strains of external pressures and internal rebellions. That unique system by which the Hindu society was perfectly organised is generally called the 'Chaturvarnya', the four-fold structure.

The structure of Hindu society based on the four-fold arrangement of people presents a perplexing problem to the Western and the Westernised Bharatiya sociologists. In utter misunderstanding and miserable evaluation of this unique institution in the evolution of human society, these thinkers at once lay at its doors sins and responsibilities for the historical degeneration and the alleged social chaos of the Hindus. In regrettable despair they plead the total abolition of the system and pray for the day of its disappearance. While they blame the system of the Hindus, they forget that a social philosopher like Plato himself commends the arrangement of the society in four

classes very much resembling the 'Four Varnas' of the Hindu system. Ancient Persian books on the laws of their social institution also resemble the Hindu concept. The four classes which the Persian social laws devised were: (1) Athravan (Brahman), (2) Rathestar (Kshatriya), (3) Vastrosh (Vaish) and the (4) Hutoksha (Shudra). Thus two ancient societies besides the Vedic also attempted though not so successfully as the Bharatiya, the arrangement of society into classes.

It is essential to examine this Hindu institution of the Four Varnas and assess its values impartially to clear off the prejudices which it has come to rouse in the minds of the masses which are indeed ignorant of its true character. It is no doubt a fact that the system lost its merit and intrinsic character and worth in the passage of time. As it presents today, it is, it must be confessed, very much different in form and spirit from its pristine nature. But the much abused transformation which itself has been the legitimate result of historical forces does not make the original institution condemnable.

On the other hand, a system which has survived in a society for over a period of thousands of years since before the pre-historic times right up-to-date must be deemed to possess something very tenacious in its constitution and composition. Especially when we see so many economic innovations and social systems challenging the Brahminical order to have crumbled into the dust only in a short span of hundred and fifty years, whereas the Hindu social system of the four Varnas still survives unassailed in its broad frame-work, everyone must inquire how strong must be its steel-frame. Had this social institution been formulated merely with the motives of upholding the class interests and monopolies or the consideration of high and low amongst the people, then surely it should have come to the ground long long back. There is no doubt and everyone who looks at the foundation of it will unmistakably discover that the motives and objects of the plan and its execution, of the structure of Hindu society on the steel-frame of the four-fold order have not only been inspired by the purest feelings without the slightest tinge of love or hatred of one class as against the other, but also out of primary consideration of the scientific truths. These days when this our Hindu

system of society is analysed and examined, the very first approach is vitiated by the class biases, or motivated by the prejudices against the supposed division of the society into classes of haves and have-nots. But when a social system is under scientific examination, one must rise above the considerations of classes. If we look to the considered thought of some Western sociologists about our class system, we are sure to be agreeably surprised. Justice Woodroff, who stayed in India for a pretty long time and studied the Hindu social system and the Science of Tantra, has traced the reasons for the abiding character of the Hindu society in this four-fold class system. In his famous study, *Is India Civilised*, he observes:

'India has presented itself as one of the immortal peoples. Suffering racial and social divisions, politically disrupted with a variety of languages and scripts, governed for centuries by strangers, she has yet held together, so that we can still speak of India. This I think is due principally to certain religious and philosophical concepts held in common by the people and as regards Hinduism in its technical sense, the wonderful organisation called Varnashrama Dharma.'

This 'Varnashrama Dharma' the Hindu social system about which there have been very extreme and contradictory opinions from total condemnation to unexceptional laudation is in fact the creation of the Vedic Aryas.

Once we state this general proposition that the Varnashrama Dharma is Vedic in its origin, the question that crops up is whether this system of division or arrangement of the society in four classes has ever been referred to in the Rig-Veda. For, if no reference could be shown, then it will have to be accepted that the system was evolved in post Rig-Vedic times. Let us therefore show how and where we find the references to this four-fold division of the society in the Vedas.

If it is accepted, what we mean by 'Vedic' in the sense in which we interpret the word traditionally, then it does not affect the position if a particular thing is or is not expressly found in the words of the Rig-Veda as such. It is enough if the idea could be traced in some one or other book or the supplement which go to make according to us the Vedas. If of course we can show the traces of the origin of the system in

the Rig-Veda itself, then those who mistakenly consider that as the first and oldest of the Vedas will certainly be more gratified and convinced. We shall now proceed to present the references.

In the famous Purush-Sukta hymn which occurs in the 10th Mandal of the Rig-Veda, the four-fold classification has been thus referred to: 'The Brahman is the mouth of this Social Being or Nation Personality; the Kshatriyas are his hands; the Vaishyas are his thighs and the Shudras indeed his feet.'

ब्राह्मणोऽस्य मुखमासीद् बाहू राजन्यः कृतः ।

ऊरू तदस्य यद्वैश्यः पद्भ्यां शूद्रो अजायत ॥

This hymn occurs in the tenth Mandal which is objected by some to be later in age. These objectors do not take it as a sufficient evidence for the proposition that the class system existed in the Vedic times. In fact, there is no strong or conclusive evidence to suppose that the tenth Mandal is a later addition except the presumption of some scholars. But even assuming that there is some truth in the objection, without admitting it, we have to state that it is not only in this hymn that the references to the class systems are found. We can cite many more instances which irrefutably prove the theory. For instance, look to this hymn in the 8th Mandal which is adjudged to be one of the oldest books of the Rig-Veda, wherein not only a mention of the four classes is made, but their functions and duties are also enunciated. The hymn is:

'Let the Brahmins be inspired with mantras; may their intellects be inspired; may you destroy the Rakshasas; O Ashvin, you two love your devotees, may you arrive here along with the Goddess Dawn, and the Sun, and partake of the Soma juice. Let the valour of the Kshatriyas rise up; may you destroy the Rakshasas; may you destroy the diseases; and may you drink the Soma juice. May you help us in increasing our cows and cattle wealth; may you make the Vaishyas prosperous, and may you take this Soma juice.' (R. 8-35-16, 17, 18).

ब्रह्म जिन्वतं उत जिन्वतं धियो हतं रक्षांसि सेधतं अमीवाः ।

सजोषसौ उषमा सूर्येण च सोमं सुन्वतो अश्विना ॥

क्षत्रम् जिन्वतं उत जिन्वतं वृन् हतं रक्षांसि अमीवाः ॥

धेनू जिन्वतम् उत जिन्वतं विशः हतम् ॥

Does this hymn not dwell upon the functions and duties of the first three classes? In R. 1, 10-42, 2, 12-4; 4, 42-1 and 7, 64-2, there are very clear references to the Varnas. There are so many more mentions of the Varnas, that it is needless to quote them here. But we cite the very well-known story of the sage Agasti who is said to have nurtured both the Varnas. (R. 1, 179-6). Sage Agasti was a Brahman, whereas he married Lopamudra who was the daughter of a Kshatriya.

From the above quotations, the objectors admit the existence of two Varnas or at the most three classes; but deny the existence of the fourth Shudra class. The mere mention in the Purush-Sukta which according to them occurs in the tenth book, which is of a later date according to them, is not enough to prove the four-fold division in the Rig-Vedic times. They maintain that this class system came into vogue only in later periods. It is necessary to meet this and such other objections.

If we take a broad view of the conditions of the Vedic times and compare them with the present form and nature of our social rites and functions, then it becomes apparent that there is very little difference between the ritual which is practised at present and that which was prescribed in the Vedic times; similarly it is very clear beyond any doubt or controversy that the common practice of religion on the whole is not much at variance from that of the Vedic days. So also if we go in details, it will be discovered that the institute of hereditary Brahmanism had come to stay even in the days of the compilation of the Vedic hymns. Once we accept that this institute of Brahmanism was determined by birth, it will become difficult to reject the existence of other classes simply for want of specific references and repudiate the traditional system of four-fold division of the society. All the three words Brahma, Kshatriya, Vaishya denoting the three classes recur in the Vedas a number of times. Acharya Sayan has put different meanings on the words in different places some in the secondary sense, and in some places in this class sense. Let us ask the question what are the primary meanings of the words and what are the secondary? The answer to this question logically should be that the primary meanings of the words must be taken to be the class denominations. Is it not logical to say that the classes denoted

by these words came to be recognised first and then attributes and characteristics associated with them began to be determined later on, and which became the secondary meanings of the words? There is another strong reason behind this proposition. The word 'Varna' occurring in the word 'Chaturvarnya' which is under discussion, also occurs in the Avesta of the Parsis. In that book also the word has several meanings, one of which is 'the customs and character' as also a 'sect and its distinguishing characteristics'. The learned author of the Jnana-Kosh, Dr. Ketkar, accepts that the word 'Varna' had come to acquire the sense of 'class' before the period of compilation of the Vedic mantras. From all that it is clear that the secondary meanings of the word 'Varna' came to be recognised later on and are posterior to the original meaning of 'class'. Now if we look to the 35th hymn of the 8th Mandal cited above, it will be clear that the three words used in the hymn do denote the classes as they also mention their functions and obligations.

It is a fact that except in the hymn referred to above and the famous 'Purush-Sukta' the word 'Vaishya' wherever it occurs denoted the common people and in some places even the humanity. This has confounded the critics more. There is, however, no need to be so confounded. The Purush-Sukta mentions the four-fold division as an arrangement of the society. Otherwise in the Vedic view the Shudra has had no independent existence at all and was always included in the Vaishya category. In the purely Vedic view the Aryan society was arranged into only three classes of Brahmanas, Kshatriyas and the Vaishyas including the Shudras. If we go further, then really speaking, the Vedic learning is considered to be concerned only with the upper two classes of the Brahmanas and the Kshatriyas who were both equal except in regard to their rights of 'teaching and accepting gifts'. Such is not the case of the Vaishyas. And hence the Vaishyas and the Shudras are never separately mentioned but are put into one category by the term Vaishya which is used in its distributive sense as covering the rest of the constituents of the society excluding those which are specifically mentioned. Therefore this word Vaishya has to be understood in the sense of the residuary society which includes

all the rest in it. In the Gathas of Zarthusra also there is exactly the same division and description which relate to the two classes and their functions, the Brahmanas and the Kshatriyas. All other people are put in the same residuary category. In the 49-7 gatha of the book it is said: 'What does a Brahman or a Vaishya avail? He alone counts who contributes to the military strength of the community.'

It will be noted that the words in the Gatha referring to sections are not denominatives of the classes but of the 'varnas' which had specifically assigned duties and obligations. 'To fight' as an obligation and duty the concept is peculiar and exclusive to the class-system only. It is a patent fact that in no other country except Bharat only one class of people were bound to perform this duty and obligation to fight for the community. In every other nation and society everyone was required to be ever ready to fight. This is the parallel situation in the Persian society which was contemporary of the Vedic age. It is not necessary to suppose that the Persians had no other class like the peasants and farmers and that they had only one class of Kshatriya which was enjoined to fight as above.

This view is supported also by the Brihad-Aranyak. In this Brahman there are some prescriptions for the offering of oblations. Only the Brahman and the Kshatriya are mentioned specifically, while the rest are bracketed together as the 'Vaishyas'. Now it will certainly not be said or doubted that in the days of the Brihad-Aranyak, there were only three classes. It is a well-recognised fact that in the days of this Upanishad, the Vedic society had come to be stabilised in the four classes.

There is one decisive landmark to determine the evolution of the four-fold system of Hindu society according to heredity. It is the rise of the intermediate classes. Unless the 'Varnas' are accepted as having become hereditary, there is no possibility of the rise of the intermediate classes. The society may be divided in any number of classes, as the Roman society was (of seven classes), but not subdivided into intermediate classes. The strange phenomenon that happened in India was that the main classes remained only four in number though the progeny

of mixed marriages gave birth to a large number of intermediate sub-divisions which did not mix with either the higher or the lower classes but remained independent and exclusive. This phenomenon could only be possible under the hereditary system of the 'Chatur-Varnya'. No other nation or human race has shown the evolution of a similar system of classes and sub-classes as the Chaturvarnya produced in Bharat. The existence of such a sub-class is a sure indication of the pre-existence of the Chaturvarnya.

In the Shukla Yajur-Veda there is a description of different persons to be tied to different posts in the performance of the Purushmedha (sacrifice). That list contains the enumeration of 'Suta' (Charioteer), 'Sailusha' (Actor), 'Karmar' (a blacksmith), 'Rathkar' (Chariot-builder), etc., who are imagined to be named and used as different types of animals to be sacrificed. All these names denote the caste, and not the occupations or professions. The Yajur-Veda contains clear references of the four 'Varnas'. From this it should be clear that in the days of the Yajur-Veda, there must have existed the hereditary four-fold divisions as well as the intermediary castes. Of these the Karmar, Bhishak, and the Shailush as also some others are mentioned in the Rig-Veda. There is no strong ground to imagine that the references denote the professions and not the castes and classes. What is there also to show that the civilisation and social behaviour in the days of the Rig-Veda was very much different from that in the days of the Yajur-Veda? The horse sacrifice which is found in the Yajur-Veda is also found in the Rig-Veda. The inference must therefore be that 'the institute of sacrifice' must be older than the Rig-Veda itself. So also there are very many things which though they appear to be strange in the Yajur-Veda are in fact older and prior to the Rig-Veda age. From all the above discussions, it can therefore be safely concluded as follows:—

(1) The institution of Brahmanism had been well established in the days of the Mantra period itself;

(2) The words *Brahma* and *Kshatriya* which occur several times in the Rig-Veda denote the classes according to Sayan;

(3) The Purush-Sukta mentions categorically the four classes and their functions and duties;

(4) In the first Mandal in the hymn of Lopamudra, there is a clear mention of the system of marriage which is called 'Anuloma' meaning marriage with a lower class;

(5) The eighth Mandal repeats the mention of the first three classes with their traditional obligations and duties;

(6) About three to four sub-class names which occur in the Yajur-Veda are found mentioned in the Rig-Veda. In the Yajur-Veda they do not simply denote the professions but the classes;

(7) There is no difference at all between the social behaviour and civilisation of the society in the days of the Rig-Veda and Yajur-Veda in fact both are identical;

(8) The mention of the intermediary class anticipates the four-fold class system.

This is more than convincing to conclude that in the days of the Rig-Vedic age the 'Chatur-Varnya' system had come to stay. In fact it must be recognised that by the Vedic Society we mean only the 'Chatur-Varnya' system and nothing else.

CHAPTER XVIII

'CHATURVARNYA' SYSTEM OF THE ARYAS

WE have shown in the last chapter that the Chaturvarnya—let us call it, the class system (though in our view 'class' does not connote the correct and full meaning of the term Varna), of the Aryas was as old as Vedic age itself. Its roots have been shown to be in the four-fold ideals of the Bharatiya people. The Aryas considered the highest limit of evolution of the society to be as is imagined in the descriptions of the so-called Krit or Golden age. In this stage of the society, it was the natural character of the individual to do his duty for the sake of duty, to regard purity as its own reward, and to evolve character for the sake of character itself without any expectations of returns. This became as if it were the very nature of every constituent of the society. The modern socialists also consider this as the most covetable and commendable stage of a civilisation of a society. These modern thinkers plead that the ideal stage has yet to come. The Bharatiya people however believe that this stage existed once in this land and will recur once more. This evolution is bound to recur in every society. It can be without any difficulty imagined that in such a stage of the society the social behaviour is bound to be very self-disciplined and hence there does not arise any need of government or a machine to control. Bhishma tells Dharmaraj in the Shanti-Parva as follows:

'In that state of the society there is no king, nor a government; there is no offender, why should there be any punishment or instrument of punishment? The society goes on performing its functions as natural functions without any force or fear and thus protects itself or rather does not require any protection from any one at all!' (Mahabharat-Shanti 59-14).

न राज्यं नैव राजा च न दण्ड्यो न च दाण्डिकः ।

धर्मैव प्रजाः सर्वा रक्षन्ति स्म परस्परम् ॥

Such being the ideal of a society before the Bharatiyas, it became necessary for them to infuse in the people a love for

duty for duty's sake without any emphasis or even the consideration of the concept of rights as an incentive. The concept of such a life dedicated to duties cannot be considered to evolve in natural course. That it is the ideal is itself enough to establish that it has to be achieved with persistent efforts and determination. A dedicated life is not a natural phenomenon of an individual or a society. The idea has to be infused and accomplished with a determined subjugation of the brute in man. Who can imagine that such a high ideal could be achieved merely by lessons in books or lectures in classes unless there are captivating patterns of ideal personalities moving before the eyes who illustrate the principles which they preach in their personal life ?

This beau ideal was intended to be placed before the entire society in the creation of the first of the four 'Varnas', namely, the Brahman. The whole 'Varna' system was evolved with this concept in this country. This class is expected to live by the very principles which the philosophy preaches to the society and keep before it an ever burning beacon light to show the path. It is in this slow, steady and ceaseless sacrifice of one's individuality for the greatest good of the entire community, like the light in the temple which goes on burning its wick and oil to illumine the sacred precincts that the purposes and fruit, cause and effect, of the creation of this class becomes consummate. The Brahmanas are extolled as the 'Gurus of the society'—'guides of the society' and that praise if meaningful is only on account of this function which they are expected to perform, and which indeed they performed well in the past. These adjectives and epithets are applied to this class to emphasise the obligations and duties, and not in any sense of superiority, rights or privileges. Thus was evolved in this first and leading class of the Brahman an ideal both philosophically high, and practically workable for the society to follow. After this determination of the motive of the Arya civilisation, our thinkers devised other classes with full attention and due care to see that the society was built up strong and whole on all fronts. That was indeed the maintenance, protection and continuance of the society. It has been very often or rather invariably observed that it is not enough to have very noble ideals for

life. It is equally necessary to have self-strength to protect one's own self as well as in case of need to offer help and protection to others. Has it not been a lesson of history that the weakness of a people is itself the cause or the invitation for aggression to the brute force of some strong nation? The Bharatiya social philosophers had realised and pronounced this truth of history. They gave their serious thought to the problems of maintaining a permanent defence and protective force of the society from foreign aggressions or the outbursts of internal evil elements and mal-contents.

It will be interesting to recollect here a historical fact. It is well-known that there was never any paucity of individuals at any time in the ancient history of Bharat who practised life according to the precepts. Even in the days of Ramayan there were large numbers of sages who dwelt in perfect happiness and peace with the world. They were ideal, no doubt; but not strong enough to protect themselves or the forest societies round them. It was on that account that a devil like Ravan could invade their habitations and kill them by scores. Rama is himself described to have seen hills of bones of such sages destroyed by the demons. It became necessary for Rama to take up the responsibilities of a warrior and go to the protection of the forest dwellers. This necessity was the mother of the thought which led the Bharatiya thinkers to make some permanent provision for the automatic evolution of a warrior-class that would be ever ready to stand alert for the defence of the society. This independent class which was enjoined with the special task of defence of the nation and maintenance of order and peace in the society was thoughtfully created as the protecting arm of the people. It was called the 'Kshatriya', the second of the four Varnas or classes.

Having thus devised two first classes, the Vedic sociologists must have felt the need of a third class for the production and multiplication of social wealth, trade, commerce, agriculture, etc. This essential function for the smooth and orderly existence of the society could not be entrusted to the care of the Brahman as he was by thought and training asked to abstain himself from worldly wealths. Nor could the Kshatriyas who bore the burden of the defence and administration of a good order in

the society be asked to share this responsibility also, as that would have meant concentrating wealth and power in the self-same hands, as a result of which the whole society would have had the misfortune of being at the mercy of the all-powerful Kshatriya rulers. Our Vedic thinkers therefore ingeniously devised a third class to look after this social function and called it the 'Vaishya'. Agriculture, cattle-breeding, trade, money and its circulation, all these were designed to be the functions of this Vaishya class. Even these were further classified and every group or family was assigned definite fields and functions in which itself it found its own source of maintenance, and thus there was never any fear or chance of competition. As the functions were further distributed amongst classes and sub-classes later on, there ceased to be any conflict or competition from outside and a fair balance of wealth was maintained. Even after this very scientific and logical classification, an urgent need was felt later, as a result of the expansion of the society as well as the requirements of meeting other exigencies and social forces which had arisen of discovering a reservoir from which all the three classes could draw their labour and devising an area into which they could arrange or rehabilitate the new additions. The thinkers therefore put all those who did not fall in the first three categories into a fourth one and called it Shudras. If we were to examine this four-fold class-system which came to be evolved according to the requirements of the expanding society by the Bharatiya thinkers, we shall find in it nothing of those sweeping charges namely, an ingenious device to perpetuate the privileges and monopolies of some one class over the other or the sense of superiority of classes, or a conspiracy of the minority to suppress and exploit the majority, but only a noble and dignified arrangement of the society arrived at with a definite and pre-determined plan which had taken into full and scientific consideration the virtues and inherent qualities of men in order to mould them harmoniously for the fruitful consummation for the benefit and perfect bliss of the whole society as such. Such is this class system of the Aryas which has taken into rational account the principle of distribution and division of labour of the

different sections of the society for the cumulative good of all. This system does not evince even a tinge of favour or prejudice to one or against the other section, as it is clear from the acknowledged fact that the system envisages the first class which is presented as an ideal, to be completely detached from the positions of power or pelf. According to us this social system of the Aryas so perfect and scientifically faultless that it can be proved to be more fruitful and more valuable than all the different social thoughts and plans which have been given out in the last 150 years of the present so-called scientific age. It will not be out of place to show here the comparative virtues of the Hindu 'Chaturvarnya'.

It was nearly two hundred years back that our country began to come into growing contact with the West. After the complete subjugation of our nation by the British they devised a system of education for this country with a definite plan and purpose of the total conquest of the minds of the people who had become their subjects. As a calculated result of the invidious but most intelligent planning there came out a rich crop of generations of our own people which reflected the ideas of the British masters, walked and talked, acted and imitated as they were taught to do, so well as to justify without exaggeration the censure hurled on them by the terms 'Angla-Shudra' or the 'Manasputra' of the British though Hindus in flesh and blood. These generations thought it to be their rightful duty and a matter of proud course to accept all the ideas and new theories that were floated in the West and to propagate them as the most perfect and logically evolved. These neo-educated Bharatiyas with a few illustrious exceptions had very little acquaintance with the traditional values of Bharatiya philosophy or the principles of life and much worse than that, they had less desire to learn anything about them... on account of some false sense of inferiority complex. They had never the occasion to assess the comparative values of the new Western thoughts and issues *vis-a-vis* the established values of the scientific ideology of the Bharatiyas, and then to determine as to what was acceptable or worth rejecting. It is very unfortunate that these English-educated people never even imagined that the Bharatiyas had any sociology worth consideration, or

comparison. The inevitable consequence of all this was that in the new age all those concepts of life and thought which arose in Europe and held sway for some time came to be respected by these people. They acquired a stable impression in the minds of these Anglo-educated Bharatiyas then and the same condition continues though with a slight variation of emphasis still today. These new Western ideologies or concepts could be classified into three as (1) Individualism, (2) Socialism and (3) Nationalism. These can be further subdivided, of course, but we put them in general in the above three categories for our examination.

The new philosophy first dawned in Europe after the French Revolution. This revolution had put an end to the old concepts of the divine and hereditary rights of men and kings. The revolution presented totally a revolutionary philosophy unknown to European societies till then which aimed at freeing man from all sorts of bondages and establishing notwithstanding the differences made by birth, status and possessions, a relation of absolute equality and freedom between man and man. This was the basis of the concept of freedom of the Individual and the rights of man, which became in due course the essence of the rule of democracy. Freedom and equality of opportunity were the two slogans which captured the minds of men in the progressive part of the world. To this day we notice the unchallenged sway of this ideal over a large area of the modern world. Despite the fact that the revolution and the concept of Democracy did succeed in snapping the bondages of man and indeed introduced many an admirable reforms and progressive thoughts in the stinking conditions of European societies then, the inadequacy of this ideology to fulfil all expectations had come to be realised by some far-seeing wise men at an early date. This ideology, it was realised, had instead of liquidating the causes of class-conflicts between men or outrooting the instincts of the animal in man, had on the other hand nourished and encouraged them the more. In the wake of the ideology, terrible cycles of wars and aggressions visited the entire globe. The wise as well as the tyrannised people reacted very strongly to this new ideology. It was out of this reaction that innumerable newer ideologies like Social-

ism, Humanism, Anarchism, Revolutionary Socialism, Guild Socialism, Fascism, National Socialism, etc., took rise. The wonder is, not one of these several ideologies and isms have been able to fill up the defects of the democracy. Rather they have aggravated all the evils which democracy had sown and have now led the human society to the very brink of destruction. Such is the very short story of these isms and ideologies which have not a longer life than of one hundred and fifty years and which in so small a span of time have brought on so many floods of fratricidal blood and fires on human habitations that one almost shudders to think if man must now and ever after always live in fear of fire and bloodshed. On the other hand, here is the 'Chatur-varnya' of Bharat which for milleniums has taught milliards of Bharatiya people to live in peace with themselves and with the outer world in a structure of a social order where there is no fear of competition nor struggle for survival but a safe assured life of peace and prosperity in the community as well as the nation. It is absurd to compare the isms like communism, fascism and democracy with a social arrangement like the Chatur-varnya which has seen the rise and decline of so many nations, their systems and ideologies. Whoever has ever compared defeat with success or despair with the glory of a social triumph?

The real test of any social order is the very society itself, how much it is affected and benefited by it. If this test is applied, then the Western ideologies and isms will surely appear to be sapless and spiritless. Nevertheless, it is a fact that they are gathering their hold upon the Bharatiya mind. It is on that account that we propose to examine the basic principles underlying these ideologies and show their worthlessness in comparison with the Vedic thoughts and system.

The one thing that strikes a student of these Western ideologies from democracy to communism in regard to their utter despair and worthlessness is that their roots lie in the insatiable craving for the enjoyment of life's pleasures, and passion. For the visionary who devised the Chatur-varnya system of society for the Bharatiyas, the one prominent thought on which his attention was focussed was how to make the 'individual' realise the 'universal'. It was this forceful thought

which compelled the social thinkers to make sacrifice, renunciation of all pleasures, as the means of accomplishing that ulterior objective, namely, the realisation of one's identity with the Universal soul. When this truth dawned upon the Bharatiya thinkers, they declared, 'immortality lies on the path of renunciation', it is by renunciation that one goes to immortality. If we ask what is the ulterior motive of a social order according to the Western thinkers, there is no difference of opinion on the answer that in the Western thought the only objective is the good life, joy of life, and nothing beyond that. It is out of the scarcity of these objects of enjoyment or in the endeavour to gather more and more means of happiness, that the whole Western ideology is born. According to us all the Western isms are the issues of reaction of having not enjoyed or obtained the means and objects of enjoyment, or of an unsuccessful effort to grab at them. As it is true that the dynastic monarchies and the feudalisms had made the lives of common masses unbearable, so also it is equally true, that the clamour for revolution by great thinkers like Rousseau and Voltaire were impelled as much by a craving for the joys of life which were denied. At the roots of both the exploitation by the feudal systems as also the endeavour for the accomplishment of the revolution lie the self-same cause—the insatiable desire for the joys of life. This can be very well perceived in the rule of capitalism and imperialism which was the concomitant result of the causes and the processes of the revolution. It can further be asserted that the capitalism and imperialism were the products of the unbridled exploitation of the means and machines in the possession of the few and are as much true, as the hunger of the many for the joys of life which are mostly denied to them, is the root cause of communism, which is in its turn, an inevitable reaction of that perversion of democracy. It is so inspired by the craving for grabbing more and more means and objects of enjoyment that under the name and excuse of communism quite a novel form of dictatorship has come to stay in Russia and spread in other countries resulting in an incomprehensible subjugation of the masses. When in course of time it became apparent that the ultimate object of

this Russian technique was to enslave the whole world into the sway of a great dictator, as a natural consequence, there shot up fascism and nazism as reactions in nations which had indomitable pride and respect for their race or nation. But there also these concepts could not find deep roots or develop into stable structures. A question may be asked here what is wrong in having the joy of life, physical happiness, etc., as the sole motive in the building up of a social system.

It is argued that absolute sacrifice is inconceivable. A human being by his very nature is inclined to gather the joys of life by satisfying the senses. He is not abstemious by nature. Moreover, if renunciation were the right motive of human life, then, what was the need of creation or the propriety of the existence of so much of abundance of the objects which please the senses in this universe all around us? Take the case of a Sanyasi from Bharat. We find that he requires a loin cloth, a begging bowl, and a long stick in his hand. Under the circumstances what is the sense in propounding that renunciation which is so irreconcilable with the nature of man should be made the motive or the driving force of human behaviour? If further analysed, it will be clear that the desire of enjoyment is itself rooted in the endeavour of obtaining happiness of life and the desire to live. Look to this desire for happiness how ingrained it is in the very nature of man; for once it is ended, the very life comes to a standstill. It is therefore right to conclude that the desire for joys of life is as much natural as the desire for life itself.

The answer to this objection is that man is not merely an animal, a bundle of desires and passions, becoming a slave to nature, but a master who tries to control his physical urges and instincts and gratify them in such a manner as to please his highest self according to his masterly wish and plan. The Bharatiya philosophers concede that the urge for happiness is natural to man and the tendency to gather it from the various objects in nature around is also not inhuman or abnormal. All our small and big books do recognise and emphasise the fact that the urges for happiness are universal. In fact our social thinkers while determining the prime motive of creation of

the Universe have laid down, 'the universe is created by the Providence in the five-fold process (by the process known as 'Panchikaran) only with the motive of providing the objects of enjoyment to individual souls. No limit or restraint would have become necessary on the enjoyment of the joys of life had there been only a single individual soul in this universe. But that is not the case. As there are innumerable objects of enjoyment so there are unaccountable individuals existing and to be born in this universe. It is on that account, that the conflict between these individuals is occasioned and is inevitable. The struggle which we notice in the animal kingdom for the acquisition of means and material securing the satisfaction of the senses was also seen to be exactly alike among the human beings at one time when mankind was not as evolved as today. With the growth of a higher sense and civilisation, man gradually realised that as it was essential to have the objects of enjoyment for the satisfaction of senses, it was also inevitable to put a curb on the insatiable desires of an individual by common social contract and by mutual understanding and arrangement. It was also necessary that the satisfaction of senses should be guaranteed to man without any anxiety and fear of their being deprived by some superior individual; it became logical to concede the same enjoyment to others in the proportion they deserved it. This came to be recognised in a social system of rights and obligations of an individual. The fact that the two-fold obligation of an individual as a member of a community soon came to be recognised by the society. The physical urges in their naked nature and their gratification howsoever individual and personal, they may be co-related to another factor, namely, the dependence of the individual upon the community, and hence had to be determined by co-operation and co-sharing with the other members of the entire society. If this inter-dependence is not recognised then the conflict and competition between individuals for the satisfaction of their desires would be unavoidable. Once that situation develops, it becomes doubtful whether any one's desires for happiness would ever be satisfied smoothly without a struggle or guaranteed without an interruption. That was

bound to lead to a situation in which the might became the right. Thus did the fascist dictatorships take their roots and rise. But if some orderly dispensation of clashless enjoyment of the pleasures and passions of life were to be desired, then it must be necessary to instil a noble motive like self-renunciation in the individuals, rather than force them to go in ceaseless quest for newer objects of enjoyment or a constant struggle of those that exist. It was as a result of this process of thought that the Bharatiya thinkers arrived at the ingenious conclusion that for the equitable distribution of the objects of enjoyment it was essential to inculcate renunciation as a virtue more effective or efficacious than acquisition and enjoyment. As contrasted with this the various concepts of the Westerners formulated during the last one hundred and fifty years appear to have miserably failed in their objectives and culminated in uncertain, fruitless, destructive and fascist forces, because their only motive has been naked acquisition and enjoyment of objective happiness. It must therefore be borne in mind that the first and fundamental precept which could be an effectively sublimating ideal for a social system that aspires to become an order for the common welfare of the community must be 'renunciation' as a motive force to act as a curb on the urges of human passions. A balanced order of enjoyment of the objects of life with a wise control or renunciation of excessive indulgence in them thus becomes a healthy rule for social equilibrium. It will be clear when we say that there must be a balance between the acquisition and renunciation of the objects of enjoyment, it is presumed that absolute renunciation is out of consideration.

The second disastrous failing in the Western concepts is the consciousness or the emphasis on the rights of man which invariably result in total conflict and consequent misery. This drawback is the legitimate issue of the tendency for the acquisition and enjoyment of the joys of life. The leaders of the great revolution while they roused the masses against the monarchical or the feudal order and their so-called divine hereditary rights, had in turn implanted the consciousness of rights, freedom of thought, expression and joys of life and

had whetted the hunger of the masses for the same. Exactly in the same manner the propagandists of Marxism had in their own ways sparked the passions and thirsts of the common masses for things and rights which were denied to them, while they excited the latter against the capitalist systems and their exploitations. And curiously enough even in the fascist and nazi dictatorships which arose either as reactions or fear of anticipations of one or the other of the above-mentioned isms, we see the same emphasis on the rights and privileges. The result of all these rivalries and struggles is the ever increasing poisoned atmosphere of distrust and enmity all around. Having set the mischief afoot without any consideration of the natural disparities in man and man, this craving for the acquisition of rights is ever mounting higher and higher. The concept of equality of opportunity irrespective of merits has made the world too small a place for competition, with the result that on one side one sees fathomless wealth as on the other there is endless poverty. The whole world seems to be rife with struggle for life and existence. The worker and the employer, the slaves and the masters, the means and machines which grind them, the students and the teachers, man against woman, the wards against the guardians, the people and the rulers, all stand arrayed against each other in a grand design of a duel. If the consciousness of 'right' is analysed, it will be seen that it is rooted in egoism. Rather it is the ego of man that prompts him to fight for his individual rights. The natural consequence of this is that the individual becomes devoid of love towards his opponent and is filled with animosity for one who denies his right. The have-nots who gather together spread a vicious atmosphere in the society which is permeated with strife and hatred. When the obstinate passion to acquire the rights sets ablaze the accumulated discontent in the groups of men a constant strife, rivalry and war are the natural results. Those who lag behind or are vanquished in this struggle for supremacy have nothing but miseries to bear; but even those who march ahead and are victorious are not very certain of their positions but have to endeavour and strive for ever to maintain their places by all fair or foul

means. In either case there is a constant conspiracy in the relations of individuals, societies and nations for supreme positions.

It must not be understood that it is the compulsion or the craving for rights that goads the activities of peoples. There is some other thing also which can animate human beings to action. That inspiration or incentive could be only the dictates of 'duty'. There is no doubt that a consciousness of rights is essential in human beings; but that has not proved to be enough or efficacious to usher the good of humanity at any time. Considering the numerous transformations which have been taking place in the Western society for the last so many years, one is tempted to think that the social systems in the West are as if in their experimental stages. When one social order seems to have failed or not satisfied the society to certain expectations, a revolution is blown up to pull the order down and implant another in its place; and when the new order also fails in its expectations, another change is contemplated and disorder blows up. Thus a tradition of chaos, disorder, and constant convulsions seems to have been set up in the West. This has thrown a section of wise thinkers in a confused state of mind, actually on the horns of the dilemma, in that they fear that the course of evolution is too long or ineffective and that of revolution is too abnormal and violent, which may possibly culminate in yet another inequitable and unjustifiable social system. Such a mishap when it occurs will have to be credited to the present tendency of paying too much attention to materialistic requirements. And under the circumstances even assuming that communism and nationalism both admit the inevitability to a certain degree of renunciation as a good principle governing the conducts of human societies, yet the very acceptance of the susceptibility of human beings to the weakness of the flesh, invariably lands or leads them to the necessary doom of dictatorship. For all these reasons it is our firm conviction and conclusion that it is not the 'rights' of man, but his 'duties', which should ever be the cornerstone of any social system. If anything aptly deserves to be the unshakable foundation of a social system it must be the

consciousness of duty. This duty is called 'Dharma' in Bharatiya systems of thought. Devotion to duty controls the promptings and provocations of egotism and transforms natural competition into a smooth co-operation. Thus in our systems of philosophies it is the duty or the 'Swadharma' that demands the highest loyalty of an individual or a society. The socio-political philosophers who devised social systems of the West while they pleaded for democracies and placed individual freedoms as the most precious concept, to be defended at all costs and consequences emphasised only the consciousness for the rights in the individuals but they failed to enthuse the more essential ingredient, namely, the loyalty and obligation to duty. That according to us introduced the 'laissez faire' and the 'franksteins' of capitalism. The same grave lapse has been committed by the sponsors and pioneers of other isms. To overcome all the follies, and failures, lapses and blunders, it has become now more expedient to make 'duty' as the first obligation in the make-up and composition of a social system as also a code of contract for all, equally binding to both the sides. It is necessary to rouse a consciousness of and devotion to duty among the working classes and their exploiters today in order that the employers who own the means and machines of production should also be forced to admit the rights of the workers and to accept the obligations towards them so as to make it incumbent on them to see that these rights are forever respected and guarded. Another serious failing which is noticed is that in all the isms from communism to guild socialism which aspire to produce an ideal social system, there does not seem to be at their disposal any means or instrument which can force or persuade the people to accept their social system without the fear of punishment by the Government. How much and how quickly such a social system which depends for its orderly working only on the element of fear-complex of the ever-watchful big brother culminates into a seething discontent can be very well seen in the periodical purges in the Soviet Russia and the spasmodic outbursts in countries where Communist rule has been of late enforced. No one can deny that punishment as a social cure is indispensable in a society which is fraught with inequalities; but if it is

thought that a social system can be raised and maintained only on element of fear of punishment, it will be a disastrous blunder. Better than the fear of punishment, a devotion to duty has to be inspired in the mind of every constituent of the society which alone can be the firm and unfailable foundation of a social system. When however the nature and scope of this concept of 'duty' has to be determined and defined, it is necessary to remember the following among other things:

(1) The duties of an individual must be so well defined as to be easily understandable and acceptable not only to the individual himself but also to the other constituents of the society.

(2) The duties of an individual must be clear in their nature and scope. The individual must clearly understand his distinct obligation and his determined place in his society, then alone the individual will stand firm in the course of life to carry out his duties without any fear or expectations of favours.

(3) Generally the duties must be consistent and correlative to the character and capacities of an individual.

(4) The duties and obligations of an individual must become ascertained either by birth or in the early childhood so as to enable the individual to become competent to perform these duties and obligations by the acquisition of necessary education and equipment of qualifications. If this is neglected, there will be a lamentable situation of an individual being trained for one thing and forced to undertake quite inconsistent obligations.

(5) In order that all the above conditions should be smoothly met, it is necessary that a consciousness is ingrained in the individual right from the start of his understanding that this life is not meant merely for the enjoyment but also for the performance of duties for the common welfare of the society and the nation as a whole.

In conclusion, it has to be said that the emphasis on the gratification of impulses and urges of enjoyment of physical pleasures without proper curbs and the need of sacrifice for the social well-being, the encouragement and defence of the rights of man without the necessary persuasion and demand for the

devotion to duty, the inexorable use of punishment as a means of commanding obedience, and the total absence of a social apparatus to infuse in the individual a love and loyalty to duties have all combined to degrade the Western social systems into total failure in their objective to give the people a stable order, and have taken the people in the last one hundred and fifty years repeatedly on the brinks of destruction. The social systems are themselves in the stage of crumbling by their own defects and weaknesses. All these systems from the much-lauded democracy to the generally feared and censured communism, are reared up on the sentiments of hatred and revenge of some class or some philosophy, race, colour or religion. These isms which are themselves the products or reactions of the sentiments of inequalities and hatred of classes can never be expected to bring in a harmony and reconciliation among them. It is this miracle of achievement which stands to the credit of the 'Chaturvarnya' system of the Hindus, namely, a harmonious co-existence and co-operation of different classes to make one whole and perfect society that is seen in Bharat right from before the Vedic age upto this day. The reason is of course that this system did not come to evolve as any reaction to any evil or undesirable set of circumstances. No strife, or causes of hatred, or discontent could be traced at the source of this 'Chaturvarnya' system. It was inspired by intense love and anxiety for the welfare of the whole society as such. It had the intellectual background of a scientific study of the reflexes of the various conflicting tendencies of human nature when confronted with the innumerable objects of enjoyment scattered in the universe, and a legitimate and logical thesis of the ways and means, the principles and policies efficacious to govern and guide the course of human conduct in a desired channel in order to make it smooth and strifeless. The one longing which stood steadfast before the eyes and minds of the Bharatiya seers was incorporated by them in their daily prayers and pledges. That prayer which they actively endeavoured to realise at once makes it clear like the sunshine how noble was their anxiety to keep this their sublime aspiration of life unforgotten. Their prayer was for the universal weal of

humanity and not merely for their kith, kin or community. The Sages sang:

‘May all be happy; may all be healthy; may all obtain the good things; let not a single individual be cursed with misery; may those who have no children get children and grandchildren; may the poor get wealths; and let every one live to a happy ripe age of one hundred years.’

सर्वेऽत्र सुखिनः सन्तु सर्वे सन्तु निरामयाः ।

सर्वे भद्राणि पश्यन्तु मा कश्चिद् दुःखमाप्नुयात् ॥

अपुत्राः पुत्रिणः सन्तु पुत्रिणः सन्तु पौत्रिणः ।

अधनाः सधनाः सन्तु जीवन्तु शरदां शतम् ॥

It should be noted that the prayer is not for a class, community or a nation but for the whole humanity. At no time in any age has any Bharatiya philosopher ever contradicted or contracted the sense and the good wishes expressed in this prayer to limit it to his people or nation. That indeed is the test how the Bharatiya philosophers considered humanity as one and indivisible and strived for the good of it as a whole. It is out of this intense desire to see the human race happy and healthy that all the systems of thought and economic orders have flowed in this country.

How was this difficult task accomplished? The Bharatiya thought-givers evolved the system by prescribing the ideals and presenting the examples. The Brahman was placed before the society as a standing model of the spirit of sacrifice for the common welfare of the society. And even amongst the Brahmans, the highest place was accorded to the ‘Sanyasi’—who renunciated everything that created attachments in this mundane world. While placing the Brahman as the sublime symbol of the ideal of life, they never forgot the fact that desires had to be satisfied to certain extents. With due consideration of the tendencies of flesh and the desires which it excites, they arranged the social behaviour with a wise and skilful balance between the attachments and detachments to the objects of enjoyment. It is a curious phenomenon in the social systems of the world that where there is greater capacity and merit, greater concessions and rights for enjoyment are

seen to have been accorded and enjoyed. But in the 'Chaturvarnya' system the rule is otherwise. In this social system, with greater capacities and merits, more responsibilities and obligations demanding greater restraints and lesser rights and more suffering and sacrifice are seen to be ordained. In the result it is indeed the individuals with lesser capacities and merits who are accorded larger amount of concessions and pleasures than what they justly deserved. Thus was the field of competition for the joys of life restricted for the more intelligent and meritorious who very generously allowed their inferiors to partake of the pleasures which they denied to themselves. How revolutionary and effectively generous this concept was, could be very well judged from an intimate study of the Bharatiya civilisation and culture. It was on that amazing achievement nowhere observed in the evolution of any other system of society that Romain Rolland went in raptures and said: 'Its vision which passes beyond the changing horizon of good and evil, judges lucid and serene the flood of souls that goes by, indulgent to the frailties of the weak and severe only with the strong. For, this lofty thought demands much of those who are capable of much; and its entire conception of the hierarchy of castes, which at first sight, seems so contemptuously aristocratic, is based on this principle (diametrically opposed to that of democracy of the West), that the more elevated the man be, the fewer are his rights and the more numerous his duties.'

The Bharatiya philosophers rooted out thus all the seeds and elements which cause conflicts and clashes in the society by evolving the 'Chaturvarnya' system. They also succeeded in eliminating the sense of duality between the individual and the society in the same stroke. Prof. V. R. Dikshitar in his valuable volume on 'War in Ancient India' writes on the social system of the Hindus:

'The Varna system of the ancient Hindus implied the four-fold division of society into Brahmanas, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and the Shudras. The Brahmanas formed the group of philosophers and teachers, the Kshatriyas the group of rulers and warriors, the Vaishyas the group of agriculturists and traders, and the Shudras the group of men engaged in different menial

services. The idea gained ground that to follow one's own Dharma, and to sacrifice one's own life, if need be, in the prosecution of that Dharma was the highest duty expected of every citizen, to whatever caste he belonged. We may remember how Krishna laid emphasis on this point to the vacillating Arjun who was out to fight his own kith and kin. This is the plain teaching of the Bhagwat-Gita. This insistence on "Swadharma" is a sound economic concept. It lays the axe on the principles of individual freedom, the struggle for existence and the survival of the fittest. The individual is made to realise his responsibility and duty to himself, his family, country, State and ultimately to God. In short, he is a member of a free corporate State. He stands or falls with the society and State. He is a part of it and not separate from it. It is a peculiar concept by which the individual did his duty and yet enjoyed freedom. Every caste realised its dependence on the other castes and this tended to avoid caste wars. Hereditary callings and the absence of competition helped an orderly movement, unlike the perpetual restlessness of modern society due to lack of equilibrium.'

How strictly every class of the society and every member of the class was required to regard his duties and act according to them with implicit faith as in a religion, and how this faith was engendered and encouraged in all the constituents of the society can be fully understood by the study of the literature on the 'duties of man'—which was generally known as the 'Dharma Sutras'. One of the famous recommendations of the great Sage Apastamba was very eloquent in explaining the need to abide by one's duties. The sage observes:

नेमं लौकिकमर्थं पुरस्कृत्य धर्माश्चरेत् । निष्फला ह्यभ्युदये भवन्ति ।
तद्यथा आम्रे फलार्थे निमित्ते छायागन्ध इत्यनूत्पद्येते । एवं धर्ममपि चर्यमाणमथ
अनूत्पद्यन्ते, नो चेदनूत्पद्यन्ते न धर्मद्वानिः भवति ।

'One should not practise his "Dharma" simply with the expectations of reaping its immediate results. Very often than not strict abidance by duties may not bring any tangible fruit to the individual. One plants and rears up a mango tree with the desire to get the sweet mango fruit. In doing this, one will surely gather the very desirable advantage of cool shade and

the pleasure of sweet fragrance of the flowers; but no one considers these, the shade and the fragrance, as the main motives in rearing up the tree; they are merely incidental advantages. So also when an individual carries out his duties and follows his enjoined "religion" he may, bye-the-bye gather some worldly advantages; but it is not only for these that he should perform his functions. Even if there is no chance of his getting all these results he should never hesitate or fail in his duties. In that case alone, in his expectationless performance of duties, will he be free from any guilt of lapses and the degradation of the social contract... "Dharma".

From all the above discussions, it must have become clear to the readers that the various theories advanced by modern thinkers for the justification or the explanation of the 'Chaturvarnya' system of the Aryas, namely, that they having come from some outside country had to incorporate and digest the various societies which pre-existed here or that the Brahman and the Warrior had to stabilise their classes, etc., are not merely faulty but absolutely unwarranted and pure myths and misconceptions.

This system of the Hindus was so ideal a pattern of society that a modern revolutionary thinker like Gandhi had wholly accepted it. To him and to some others who indeed appreciate this caste system of the Hindus, there appears to be some defect or drawback in its being hereditary and dependent on birth. In this social system depending upon heritage for the determination of its class and character, no one can deny that there is a scientific justification on the ground of heritage. An individual born in the folds of this social system becomes a constituent of some one class or caste by the virtue of his birth. If the individual crossed his fold or encroached upon the rights and professions of other folds, he became *ipso facto* liable to be excommunicated by the community. This state of affairs came to be inherited in the social system right from the days of the Vedas as would be recollected from our discussions in the foregoing chapters. Further it can be shown that the concepts of marital contracts and sacraments of the Bharatiyas are also evolved and based upon some scientific thinking on the truths of biological heredity. What seemingly strike to be

the restraints on individual freedoms in the field of matrimonial alliances are nothing short of scientific corollaries in the experiments in the field of inheritance of qualities, character and physical properties from parents and the inter-lineage relation. If these more technical and penetrating truths on which the Bharatiya thinkers based their theories of social system are investigated and thoroughly understood, then many of the misconceptions of modern critics will be corrected.

If we go deep to the roots of the four-fold objectives of life which the Bharatiya philosophers commended to the people, and examine the intimate relation of these to their four-fold social arrangement, it will become clear that they had been impelled by a studied and calculated plan to create and mould the individuals, to endow them with particular qualities and virtues, and to fit them in particular patterns, all meant to make the society a complete and perfect whole. To tell it in other words, they were never anxious to put forth some half-hazard social system in which individuals were thrown in the society as they were born in utter chaos and confusion at random, but aspired to experiment with heredity itself to see if virtues, capacities and character could be ingrained in the stage of embryos itself and with that end in view they wanted to create an effective apparatus. In this highly biological experiment, it was inevitable to keep out the consideration of heredity along with the external circumstances. For a good produce or procreation, the seed and the external circumstances including the culture are potent factors and causes. It is for this reason that in the Hindu idea the cultivation of impressions and equipment of the child does not start at so late a stage of childhood but right from the days of its conception in the mother's womb. It will be amusing to note here that the astonishing scientific operations for the conversion of sexes which attracted great attention in the last ten years were a fact and practice known to ancient Hindus as is seen in the sacrament called 'Punsavana'. When the problem handled by ancient Hindus was so significant, far-reaching and so comprehensive of the creation of measure and device which was intended to germinate particular qualities and capacities in the

individual with conception itself, no one will deny the need of the consideration of heredity as an indispensable biological factor. At least those who are aware of the fundamentals of biological heredity will not dispute this premise. Lasky also observes: 'The type of individual character depends partly upon inner temperament and partly upon external circumstances.' This was very well recognised by the Bharatiya sociologists who had therefore devised an effective arrangement right from the start with full consideration of these inner and inherent factors for the proper development of particular genius and qualities in different individuals to become conducive and suitable to fulfil their destined roles in life. It is a well established truth that not merely the intellectual propensities of a child as well as education but peculiar inherited qualities count very much in its total moulding. Kesarling observes, 'Not only intellectual but moral qualities are hereditary.' It goes without saying that those who aimed at creating types of characters and qualities in the individuals to be efficient to fulfil the calculated purposes had indispensably to take into consideration the effects of heredity in the creation of their social systems. It is absolutely necessary to maintain the purity of the seeds and the peculiarities of the external circumstances such as the field and the environment and surroundings, etc., in order to perpetuate specific virtues of classes through generations. Watson says: 'To preserve a type, true breeding is essential.' This is enough to remove all doubts and misconceptions why the 'Chaturvarnya' system was devised to be hereditary.

It may appear that all the above discussion is an irrelevant diversion from the subject in hand. It is quite a different problem whether the hereditary social system of the Hindus is efficacious or not. It may be that the system in its true pristine form is not prevalent in the country today. But our discussion is just to the point to explain the rise of the system in the Vedic times and its sociological and scientific background.

One question that remains to be answered is the propriety of naming scheme of four divisions of the society into which the Bharatiya philosophers organised it as the 'Chaturvarnya'—the Four-Varna system. In all other social systems the current

and popular term for the different groups or sections of the society is the clan or the class. The Bharatiya sociologists discarded this common term and adopted 'Varna' commonly understood as 'colour' as a significant term to denote the divisions of the society. What is the root meaning and the reason of adopting this word 'Varna' to denote the classes? The word literally means 'colour'.

Maharshi Patwardhan who is honoured as a great divine in the field of research and realisation of the Vedic concepts has very ingeniously explained this 'Varna', which is a peculiarly exclusive idea of the Vedic sociology. His thesis on the subject which is scientifically and logically satisfactory, throws a vivid light on this most disputed word 'Varna' and the concept behind it.

'The Vedic culture is the most scientifically perfect consummation of one of the mighty social evolutions through which humanity has passed. No culture or civilisation can reach the peak of perfection or attain a stage of harmonious unity without successfully solving the secrets of the existence of life and the universe, and understanding their co-relations, interdependence and ends. This confounding riddle of the universe including the life in it, was resolved by the Bharatiya seers in one all-comprehensive and ultimate truth, namely: "all that is, is one, without a second". On this one fundamental truth they built their structure of the society, evolved their culture and civilisation, which is now known as the Vedic. The Vedic was the most perfect of the human civilisations, whereas what are now known as the "Varnashram-Dharma", the "Pauranic" system and the present metamorphosis of all the by-gone ideologies are merely the decadent skeletons all trying to cling with labour and pain to the pristine form and substance. All these later forms are in fact not evolutions but devolutions or dis-integrations, not the steps to rise to higher stages but merely the bunds to prevent the fall to the lower depths.

There is no doubt that in some remote age in the past there was one common "Varna". The "Chaturvarnya"—the Four-Varnas—arose later. It is wrong to imagine that the four-fold division was created for the convenience of distribution of social work and functions according to capacities and merits.

The truth is that this division was devised on the inviolable truths of the sciences of biology and the "Brahmavidya". The division and functions was not the criterion of this social system; but it was the distribution of social work and functions on scientific calculations and considerations of the inherited capacities and character of individuals, with the purpose of producing the maximum benefit and welfare to the society. That was the secret behind the concept of this institution of the "Chaturvarnya".

It was after long and varied experiments that the Bharativa philosophers discovered that at the root and bottom of this whole universe there is one primary element and that is the "sound". When it became manifest it began to assume form, shape and space. To those ancient seers that original and fundamental sound and this universe of shape, form, and space were both identical, merely two manifestations of the self-same ultimate essence. That is how the name and forms, or the terms and their meanings, i.e., this objective universe—this duality came to be realised. In fact the relation between "Shabda"—sound, and its meaning; the "universe" is of cause and effect. It is as much true that from an external thing, sound takes shape as it is an inviolable truth that it is the sound that gives shapes and forms to different things. The process is identical in as much as it is mutually transformable. The only clue that is necessary is to correctly know the true sound of the external object. And thus the real truth of the Vedas has to be discerned in the reality of the universe. (It will be recollected here that in the early chapters of this work we have discussed the theory that the basic waves of sound are the raw material of which this universe is merely a manifestation.) Speech is the most powerful weapon or means which an individual can acquire and use. The Vedic seers designed to use the power of words namely the sound to secure their desired objects. It became essential for them to reproduce without the least adulteration identical sounds which were discovered in their original form as causes at the root and back of the creation of the universe. This required that the body-organ which was to reproduce the waves of sound must correspond

and be conducive to the production of the sounds exactly alike with the original; and therefore it required to be maintained in a specific condition. To illustrate what we say, let us imagine, the results of pumping in steam-power in different proportions in different engines. The engines will either run the machine, or burst and fly into the space damaging anything which it strikes, or break and crumble down in their own place. Similar results may occur if the great power of the words and sounds were to breathe in different bodies. The incorporate sound at the beginning of the universe transforms itself in the shape and form of this universe. So also all actions and functions of the living organism take shape and distinct forms by the power of the "Prana", the breath, wind, and flow in seventy-two thousand streams and accomplish millions of functions of the body. If in all these streams of wind, sound, there is the undercurrent of the real power, then only the organism will be active and alive as it could be. Such an organism being merely a replica of the universal soul, it reflects the functions and forms as are found in that universal soul, like a wirenet-vessel which, if plunged in water, will have the identical waves and norms of the water inside the vessel as outside the wire-gauge. In the proportion or the degree in which the contacts are loose or fast with the original source, the organism will reflect its identity or aloofness from the universal soul. It was therefore thought necessary to find out as many more individuals normal in the sense of being efficacious to reflect the original universal patterns to assign to them the functions of reproducing the Vedic sounds for their personal benefit and through them for the common welfare of the whole society.

From the above elucidation, it will be clear that there could be four types of organisms for the purpose of reproducing the Vedic sounds. The first type will be one in which this flow of power, or in the terminology of Patanjali, the relation between the sound and its meaning will be reflected without any impediment or adulteration. In such an instance the Vedic sounds in the recitation of a particular "mantra" will be so effective as to fulfil the meaning of the mantra and bestow the blessing on the individual and the society. There may be a

second type in which the sounds being not reproduced as they should be to represent their original potency or to become the medium of the flow of the power in them may bless the organism as such but may not be able to benefit the society; and if it transmits wrong sounds, it may even become the cause of misery to others. There may be some types of organisms which have been so badly spoiled that any effort to reproduce the Vedic sounds may result in the evil effects for both the individual as well as the society.

The power of speech may also be helpful in two different ways, namely, that it may either purify the organism and make it competent to realise the "Brahmavidya" or failing short of the latter expectation it may help the individual to acquire all the worldly pleasures and happiness. The "Chaturvarnya" system of the Hindus has this great theory at its roots and bottom. The "Chaturvarnya" is thus shown by the traditional Vedic thinkers to be the effect and issue of the knowledge and philosophy of the individual and the universal souls. It is on this account that this system came to be designated as the "Chaturvarnya". Even according to our Yoga Shastra, every sound has a shape, form and colour. In the converse case, every shape and colour has, also a corresponding sound. They differ only in the proportion and number of the waves and modulations which send sensations to our organs of perception. If only our organs become trained and sensitive to receive and understand these modulations, then surely we shall be able to realise and perceive any object in its primary form of sound or word, and its meaning, i.e., physical object as we desire. This is the reason why an articulated sound (Akshar) and the colour "Varna" by which the sound-object (Shabda and Varna), can be realised in particular form and shape are both called in Sanskrit by one word "Varna". It is for this reason that our Sanskrit alphabets are generally called "Varnamala". It is claimed that the primary sounds as well as those which can be reproduced in the local space by an organism, can be also perceived and recognised by sight from the colours which can test the correctness of the phones of those sounds. In other words, colour and sound are mutually convertible and correlated. For the

eligibility to understand the science of "Brahmavidya", the purity of culture which is to some extent efficacious in producing that eligibility, the Bharatiya thinkers arranged the same in four classes and called them as the four "Varnas". This derivation and process of division of the society in four classes is consistent and true even according to the science of Yoga as evolved by the sage Patanjali. This is the most priceless analysis of the process and reasons why our social system was based on four Varnas and was called as such.' (Annasahib Patwardhan: By V. K. Palepaker Antrendix).

We have already suggested that there is no such device of moulding the character and qualities in individuals in the Western systems, to which reason can be assigned the total failure of them. A society can never be expected to rise to higher culture and civilisation without the rise and sublimation of the individuals. It will never pay or be fruitful to neglect the individuals and count high expectations from any society. The four objectives which the Bharatiya philosophers held so dear are expected to be realised only by this scientific social order called the Varnashraan-Dharma which forms the essence of the four-class system of the Hindus. It will be interesting to know how the ideals of these four classes were exemplified before the people in order to inspire confidence and faith in their efficacy to obtain the calculated objectives. We shall therefore now turn to the four patterns of the 'Varnas' and their respective ideals recommended in the system of the society. The Brahman is the first 'varna' entrusted with the task of educating the society with precepts and practices of the principles which the system wanted to imbibe in the people for the common weal of the nation. It was this class which bore the burden of evolving the culture and civilisation of the Vedic society and leading it to the heights of glory and perfection.

CHAPTER XIX

BRAHMAN—THE LEADER

BRAHMAN, the philosopher and guide of the Vedic society has become so vexed a target of criticism and abuse of the modern thinkers as no other class in the ancient society. On a judicious view of the extent and purport of the criticism, one would be justified to conclude that some other motive than just indignation has been provoking this mischievous misrepresentation.

It is accused that the Brahmans degraded the common people to a doom of ignorance and reaped the rewards of their learning and the fruits of knowledge. An impartial observer who looks at the history of the culture and civilisation of Bharat even broadly will surely notice that the fact belies the charges. It will be very apparent to him that if there was any class or section of the society in the human history which chose poverty and privation of its own self-will and dedicated itself to the acquisition of knowledge in a single-purpose quest of the secrets of life and the ultimate truth behind the riddle of universe, it was this Brahman and generally his class. The Brahman who having very smilingly taken up this hard course of deprivation of physical comforts and dedication to knowledge had indeed paved the way for the acquisition of joys of life and happiness of the rest of the society which he led. It should never be forgotten that even in the field of learning and knowledge the Brahman never denied or prevented but always invited and offered the rights and blessings of learning excepting only the science of Brahma to the rest of the society. Instances are not wanting to show that in the field of some sciences and arts in which the other classes excelled, the Brahmans never hesitated to become the followers and disciples. The science of the Brahma or the Vedas which was forbidden by them to the masses was concerned more with the science of the 'sound', correctly speaking, much more than the

science of phonetics. The grievance though genuine is as unjustified as that of a fiddle, should it grieve that the musician does not pat it as he does the tabor. It has been explained in the preceding chapter how a well-tuned organism is necessary for the reproduction of sounds of the Vedic mantras in order that they should be fully meaningful, that is creative and fruitful. It is the Brahmanas who have presented the gifts of such comprehensive oceans of learning and knowledge in the form of Mahabharat and Ramayan and the large number of Puranas which generosity in fact entitles them to be thanked to no mean measure for their attention to and care of the welfare of the society. There was never any impediment in the way of an individual to attain his self-happiness and enjoy the freedoms in his respective field in the society. It is common knowledge that the Brahmanas on the whole as such had been restrained from pursuing certain paths which led to worldly joys and happiness, whereas the rest of the society had full freedom to indulge in them. It is a curious fact worthy to be admired that the Brahmanas on the one hand forbade themselves the path of acquisition of happiness by the pursuit of the objects of enjoyment which secured it, but prescribed the same to the rest of the society to follow, with caution and care only to such extent as to please one's soul without losing it. Whereas they chalked out for their class a harder and more testing course of renunciation of the joys of life by cutting at the very roots of desires, the Brahmanas very generously prescribed and preached how to attain the same *summum bonum* of life as they reached, by the easier course of masterly enjoyment and pursuit of the objects of life. The other classes which had full rights to acquire knowledge of all the arts and sciences, neglected them and failed to educate themselves in the interim periods. But how could the Brahmanas be any way blamed for this fault of the people themselves. Except in a couple of instances extending over very small periods of Bharatiya history the Brahman class never abandoned its self-chosen course of the acquisition of learning and honour all throughout shunning all the happiness which power and purse secured. On the other hand the rest of the society thought it more advantageous to secure the worldly prosperity and happiness by pursuing

the courses other than of study and dedication to learning, which they totally forsook. It is not just but mean to accuse the Brahman of having deprived the other 'Varnas' of light and knowledge which the latter themselves neglected. It must be admitted that the Brahman laid down a strict rule that he will acquire prestige and prosperity only by means of his learning and followed it very strictly all throughout the long history of Bharat, excepting the handful of instances referred to above giving freedom to all others to enjoy the power for milleniums. It is in this continuous and consistent denial of the ways of the world and a self-less exemplary dedication to the noble principles of life that the Brahman was able to build up a culture and civilisation which is as yet unrivalled in the human history for its greatness and enduring virtues through ages.

The Brahmans of Bharat have been compared by some ignorant authors with the priests class of the West. They have wrongly attributed all the sins and crimes which are levelled at the doors of the Church and the clergy. A close study of the two classes and their roles will, however, reveal that there is no comparison between the two. Right from the days of the Greek invaders, historians who observed the leadership of the Brahman class of India have admired their uprightness and self-less behaviour which according to them was the main spring of the preservation of honour and pride of the nation. The wily English administrator saw through the fact that this Brahman class which led the society could not be bent or prevailed over by any means of temptations. With the object of bolstering up the leadership of the class, the English historians and critics began to present dark pictures of the doings of this class and spread the poison of malice and hatred against them among the less educated masses by accusing the former of sinister motives such as referred to above. It is an irony of fate that the vicious propaganda got credence in this country. It is more unfortunate that not only the masses but the half-educated English-speaking pupils of the Western authors also began to reproduce the scandals and the suicidal charges.

The Brahmans can by no stretch of imagination be called or compared to the clergy and the priests of the Western Church. It is wrong and fallacious to apply the terms like the clergy

and religious priests to Brahmans of Bharat in the sense in which they are understood in the West: and to assess the role of the Brahmans by the misapplication of these faulty terms is a still graver sin. Nor could the Vedic Brahmans be also styled as 'philosophers' understood by Plato, or as the teachers of the masses as supposed by many in the present days. It is indeed not so easy to correctly understand the role of the Brahman class in the Vedic society unless we analyse the expressions and commands like the 'Lokpalas', 'the Brahman should not be killed', 'the killing of the Brahman is the greatest sin in the world', 'the king should not tax the Brahman', etc. It is not only ignorance but ingratitude also to accuse the Brahman simply because he was born as such and practised priesthood or to suppose that such a one was exempt from all taxes and was beyond all jurisdiction of all laws which was indeed never a fact. It is common knowledge how Lord Krishna got such a Brahman like the Guru Dronacharya killed in the battle and dealt severe punishment to Ashvathama. It is very essential to examine this question without bias as a subject of pure historical research as to what is Brahmanhood and who is a real Brahman. Only then it would become apparent why the Vedic thinkers created such a unique class like that of the Brahmans and how greatly they have obliged the Hindu society by doing so. That the Brahman is not a clergy or a priest has been rightly noted by some honest Western scholars. In his 'Introduction to the study of Hindu Doctrines' Rene Guenon explicitly lays down his conclusion as follows:—

'It should be added that the Brahmans are not priests in the Western and religious sense of the word. No doubt their functions include the accomplishments of various kinds of rites because they must possess the knowledge necessary to make them fully effective but they also include above everything else their conservation and regular transmission of the traditional doctrine.'

The Bharatiya philosophers recognised a natural fact that it was impossible to eliminate classes in this inequitable world. They tried to accept the fact and reconcile the inequalities and differences in their social structure. It was an effort to arrive

at a harmonious compromise between the inequalities of nature. To accomplish this difficult job, they decided to create an ideal class which worked selflessly devoting itself to the understanding, and realising the fundamental values of life in their practice. This selfless pattern of a social ideal was devised to be presented before the society as an object lesson. Only such a class could really lead the society to the heights of culture and civilisation. One must look to the first 'Varna', namely, the Brahman class from this angle.

If we turn to the way of life and the means adopted by this class to rise to its objective, we shall, certainly, be convinced that it is this class which had undertaken a ceaseless struggle to imbibe in itself the highest precepts and principles of Vedic philosophy; and to exhibit them for the enlightenment of the masses. It was the task of bringing to one's self and spreading the light for the good of the others. It will have to be admitted that this device of practical demonstration of the highest ideals of a culture and civilisation in the individual lives from sire to son, instead of presenting it in the form of books, has been a unique achievement in the history of human societies. If we understand this role of the Brahmanas, it will be clear that it was not merely the study of the Vedas, or the acquisition of knowledge which made a person a learned philosopher as Plato thought. Renunciation, knowledge, faith in penance, sterling character, and dedication to the search of fundamental truths without any corresponding rewards or returns, are the distinctive character and qualities of a Brahman. Manu observes: 'The body of a Brahman is not meant to be a vehicle (medium or instrument) of enjoyment of the objects of life to satisfy the senses. It is for the purpose of self-mortification for the attainment of everlasting happiness by means of all penance in this life.'

ब्राह्मणस्य हि देहोऽयं क्षुद्रकामाय नैष्यते ।

कुच्छ्राय तपसे चेह प्रेक्षानन्तसुखाय च ।

सावित्रीमात्रसरोऽपि वर विप्रः सुयंत्रितः ।

... सर्वोऽपि सर्वविक्रयी ॥

That is his function. There may be a Brahman who may be endowed with all knowledge, but does not observe the pres-

criptions and prohibitions of his class, indulging himself in the enjoyment of the objects of life. There will be another Brahman who knows only the recitation of Gayatri Mantras, but is perfectly disciplined as a model of restraints which are expected of him. The second Brahman is by far superior to the first one howsoever learned he may be.

There is a very important passage in the dialogue between King Nahusha and Yudhisthira on the functions and characteristics of a Brahman. The dialogue runs:

Nahusha : 'O, Yudhisthira, who can be called a Brahman? What is that which is the greatest truth worth to be known? You appear to me of penetrating intellect and comprehensive wisdom. I, therefore, want to know these things from you.'

Yudhisthira : 'O King of the Nagas, wherever you find uncompromising regard for truth, unreserved tendency for sacrifice, forgiveness, golden character, compassion for life, a faith in penance, contempt for despicable things, and a cool collected nature; you should understand him to be a Brahman.'

Nahusha : 'O King, many-a-time we notice all these virtues even in an individual of a low-born. In such a case, what will decide the class?'

Yudhisthira : 'If all these characteristics are found, then you should know, O King, that the individual is not a Shudra; nor would an individual born as a Brahman, but devoid of the above qualities be considered a Brahman. The truth is, one who possesses these characteristics is a Brahman; whosoever does not possess them is not a Brahman.'

Nahusha : 'O King Yudhisthira, if, according to you these characteristics and qualities make one a Brahman, then what is the meaning of the terms and divisions of the classes? These classes would be, indeed, meaningless if they do not act up to their duties?'

Yudhisthira : 'Nahusha, one must understand that it has become nowadays very difficult to recognise the correct class to which an individual belongs on account of the deplorable intermixture of the Varnas. For this reason the wise philosophers give more consideration to the character and the virtue of a man in the determination of his class (than his birth). In that sense I have given my opinion what and who should

be called a Brahman. Wherever there is a refined character, then definitely he is of the Brahman spirit.'

सर्प उवाच :—

ब्राह्मणः को भवेद्वाजन् वेद्यं किं च युधिष्ठिर ।
ब्रवीत्यतिमतिं त्वां हि वाक्यैरनुमिमीमहे ॥

युधिष्ठिर उवाच :—

सत्यं दानं क्षमा शीलमानृशंस्यं तपो घृणा ।
दृश्यन्ते यत्र नागेन्द्र स ब्राह्मण इति स्मृतः ॥

सर्प उवाच :—

शूद्रेष्वपि च सत्यं च दानमक्रोध एव च ।
आनृशंस्यमहिंसा च घृणा चैव युधिष्ठिर ॥

युधिष्ठिर उवाच :—

शूद्रे यत् भवेद् लक्ष्म द्विजे तच्च न विद्यते ।
न वै शूद्रो भवेत् शूद्रो ब्राह्मणो न च ब्राह्मणः ॥
यत्रैतल्लक्ष्यते सर्प वृत्तं स ब्राह्मणः स्मृतः ।
यत्रैतन्न भवेत्सर्प तं शूद्रमिति निर्दिशेत् ॥

सर्प उवाच :—

यदि ते वृत्ततो राजन् ब्राह्मणः प्रसमीक्षितः ।
वृथा जातिस्तदाऽऽबुधमन् कृतिर्यावन्न विद्यते ॥

युधिष्ठिर उवाच :—

जातिरत्र महासर्प मनुष्यत्वे महामते ।
संकरात्सर्ववर्णानां दुष्परीक्ष्येति मे मतिः ॥
तस्मात् शीलं प्रधानेष्टं विदुर्यं तत्त्वदर्शिनः ॥
यत्रेदानीं महासर्प संस्कृतं वृत्तमिष्यते ।
तं ब्राह्मणमहं पूर्वमुक्तवान् भुजगोत्तम ॥

(Mahabharat, Wanaparva 180, 20, 21, 22, 23, 25, 26, 30, 31, 33, 37)

This dialogue well illustrates how the Bharatava sociologists measured the spirit and role of Brahman. It was recognised

in the time of Mahabharat that the spirit of Brahmanhood may not be detectable in an individual simply born of Brahman parents. The author of Mahabharat, therefore, very ingeniously enumerated and classified a long series of Brahmanas born to Chandal parents. The practical sociologists only kept and considered the Brahmanas who were born in the Brahmin families and possessed the real character and qualities of the Brahmanas as the ideal representatives of the spirit of Brahmanhood. It is only such spirited Brahmanas that were entrusted with the task of leading the masses and evolving the culture and civilization. All the rest were expected to be treated generally by the same common rules of Government and social administration. If this fact is recognised, then it will be apparent that all the accusations that the Brahman contrived to maintain his domination, and perpetuate his privileges are baseless. The Mahabharat observes: 'Those who are learned and of sterling character, those who try to illustrate the precepts and principles of the highest and fundamental values in their own lives, and those who treat the whole society with the same common and equitable considerations are indeed as high as the Brahman. Those who are well-versed in the knowledge of all the three Vedas and also practise all the prescriptions laid down for their class are to be called divine Brahmanas. These are, in other words, the gods on earth. Those who have failed in the functions and duties enjoined by the class of their birth, such wretched Brahmanas are verily the Shudras. A king should always employ such Brahmanas who do not study the Vedas nor perform the sacrifices for all the social work; and he is entitled to tax them. Those who perform the priestly duties, preaching, offering advice, acting as messengers as well as informants, are really Kshatriyas amongst the Brahmins. Those who work in cavalry, infantry, regiments of chariots and elephants are as like the Vaishyas. A king is entitled to tax these people to fill his treasury. Only the real Brahmanas described above should be exempted from taxes. The king is the master of the wealth of all those who are not Brahmanas. According to the Vedic social convention, those who neglect their own duties and meddle in or encroach upon the functions of others, do not deserve any consideration of

the King. In fact, the King should control them, and deal with them as he does with the common subjects.'

विद्यालक्षणसंपन्नाः सर्वत्र समदर्शिनः ।

एते ब्रह्मसमा राजन् ब्राह्मणाः परिकीर्तिताः ॥

ऋग्यजुःसामसंपन्नाः स्वेषु कर्मस्ववस्थिताः ।

एते देवसमा राजन् ब्राह्मणानां भवन्त्युत ॥

जन्मकर्मविहीना ये कदर्या ब्रह्मबन्धवः ।

एते शूद्रसमा राजन् ब्राह्मणानां भवन्त्युत ॥

अश्रोत्रियाः सर्वे एव सर्वे चानाहिताग्नयः ।

तान् सर्वान् धार्मिको राजा बलिं विष्टिं च कारयेत् ॥

ऋत्विक् पुरोहितो मंत्री दूतो वार्तानुकर्षकः ।

एते क्षत्रसमा राजन् ब्राह्मणानां भवन्त्युत ॥

अश्वारोहा गजारोहा रथिनोऽथ पदातयः ।

एते वैश्यसमा राजन् ब्राह्मणानां भवन्त्युत ॥

एतेभ्यो बलिमादद्यात् हीनकोशो महीपतिः ।

ऋते ब्रह्मसमेभ्यश्च देवकल्पेभ्य एव च ॥

अब्राह्मणानां वित्तस्य स्वामी राजेति वैदिकम् ।

ब्राह्मणानां च ये केचिद् विकर्मस्था भवन्त्युत ॥

विकर्मस्थाश्च नोपेक्ष्या विप्रा राज्ञा कथंचन ।

नियम्याः संविभज्याश्च धर्मानुग्रहकारणात् ॥

(Mahabharat, Shanti 76:2-11)

The Mahabharat further enjoins that such Brahmanas who undertake low services, are not eligible for a place in religious functions. The moral of all this passage is that even in the days of Mahabharat as the learned Bhishma explains above, the Brahman class was put to a very strict test of adherence to his role in the society. That was, indeed, more true in the days of the Vedas actually. Only those who exhibited these higher virtues were recognised as Brahmanas. The Brahman was indeed a self-mortifying ascetic, penanceful, searcher of truth, living a very noble selfless life with the highest thoughts of being a useful instrument for ushering the welfare of humanity, personally shunning all pleasures, and rising above all pas-

sions, accepting poverty and privation with a smile as his self-choice. He never envied or aspired for the wealth of others. He never offered to sub-serve any man or king for his own bearing. The master of his own organs, a receptacle of all virtues like control, compassion, penance, devotion to truth, a cool and calculated faith in his own destiny, the Brahman toiled ceaselessly to gather knowledge and spread the light for the enlightenment of others. That was the mandate of the Vedas for the Brahman class. Manus tells us the reason behind creating such a hard and glorious ideal of the Brahman class: 'It was only for the illustration of the eternal truth which should govern our social life that the Brahman was created. It is for him to protect, preserve and perpetuate the invaluable treasure of the law of life, that is why, he is the philosopher, guide and protector of the society.'

उत्पत्तिरेव विप्रस्य मूर्तिर्धर्मस्य शाश्वती ।

स हि धर्मार्थमुत्पन्नो ब्रह्मभूयाय कल्पते ॥

ब्राह्मणो जायमानो हि पृथिव्यामधिजायते ।

ईश्वरः सर्वभूतानां धर्मकोशस्य गुप्तये ॥

(Manusmriti 1 : 108-109)

Thus it will be seen that a Brahman is expected to be an ever-alert worshipper of the fundamental truth without any expectation of a reward. He is really ever bound in service of the society without any rest.

The life of a Brahman was required to be completely aloof and above the temptations of this world. The Vedic sociologists laid extreme stress upon the purity of this class. If we look at the work which a Brahman is required and permitted to do, we shall be convinced how much away from glamour and out of the stage of publicity of fans and footlights he was kept.

द्विजातीनां अध्ययनमिज्यादानम् । 1 ।

ब्राह्मणस्याधिकाः प्रवचनयाजनप्रतिग्रहाः । 2 ।

पूर्वेषु नियमस्तु ॥ 3 ॥

(Gautam Dharmasutra, Adhyaya 10)

Gautam in his Dharmashastra has assigned six functions to

the Brahman. The first three classes which are called twice-born, have three duties in common: (a) acquisition of learning, (b) performance of sacrifices and worship of the gods and (c) 'Dan'—giving gifts. But this created a problem for the Brahmanas how to maintain themselves and their families. Gautam explains that the Brahmanas should undertake three more functions which can become the source of their livelihood. The work of a teacher and preacher, assistance in the performance of a sacrifice and acceptance of gifts, are allowed to the Brahmanas to make their both ends meet. It will be seen that all these three undertakings can never bring any larger or certain amount of wealth or means of happiness to the Brahmanas. It can never be expected that a Brahman could gather mass of wealth by preaching and teaching, or performing sacrifices, or receiving gifts. The Brahman had to thank himself if he got at least enough to carry on his normal course of life. Compared to the means of livelihood allowed to the Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and Shudras, these three will appear to be very insignificant. While the Brahmanas were desired to be content with what they got, the Kshatriyas were desired to be always ambitious with a will to conquer. The Kshatriyas had, indeed, the world to conquer and rule, and enjoy the pleasures with all the wealth in it. All power over men, and money was reserved for Kshatriyas. The Vaishyas controlled the means of production, agriculture, trade, commerce, and the cattle-wealth; whereas the Shudras were free to show their skill in artisanship, and the social duties and utilities. It will be noticed that except in the case of the Brahman class, nobody else was kept hanging in suspense, or dependent upon the whim and will of the giver. The three categories of work which a Brahman could undertake, were in a sense unproductive. It was not obligatory even on the Brahman to adopt these three means for his livelihood, as it was a rule for others not to abandon these their prescribed obligations. This made the life of a Brahman very hard, but he was expected to go through the ordeal in the pursuit of true knowledge.

In the Gautam Dharma Sutas, there is a list of types of Brahmanas who were considered to be ineligible to receive gifts. Gautam tells us that a Brahman should not be invited

sions, accepting poverty and privation with a smile as his self-choice. He never envied or aspired for the wealth of others. He never offered to sub-serve any man or king for his own bearing. The master of his own organs, a receptacle of all virtues like control, compassion, penance, devotion to truth, a cool and calculated faith in his own destiny, the Brahman toiled ceaselessly to gather knowledge and spread the light for the enlightenment of others. That was the mandate of the Vedas for the Brahman class. Manu tells us the reason behind creating such a hard and glorious ideal of the Brahman class: 'It was only for the illustration of the eternal truth which should govern our social life that the Brahman was created. It is for him to protect, preserve and perpetuate the invaluable treasure of the law of life, that is why, he is the philosopher, guide and protector of the society.'

उत्पत्तिरेव विप्रस्य मूर्तिर्धर्मस्य शाश्वती ।

स हि धर्मार्थमुत्पन्नो ब्रह्मभूयाय कल्पते ॥

ब्राह्मणो जायमानो हि पृथिव्यामधिजायते ।

ईश्वरः सर्वभूतानां धर्मकोशस्य गुप्तये ॥

(Manusmriti 1: 108-109)

Thus it will be seen that a Brahman is expected to be an ever-alert worshipper of the fundamental truth without any expectation of a reward. He is really ever bound in service of the society without any rest.

The life of a Brahman was required to be completely aloof and above the temptations of this world. The Vedic sociologists laid extreme stress upon the purity of this class. If we look at the work which a Brahman is required and permitted to do, we shall be convinced how much away from glamour and out of the stage of publicity of fans and footlights he was kept.

द्विजातीनां अध्ययनमिज्यादानम् । 1 ।

ब्राह्मणस्याधिकाः प्रवचनयाजनप्रतिग्रहाः । 2 ।

पूर्वेषु नियमस्तु ॥ 3 ॥

(Gautam Dharmasutra, Adhyaya 10)

Gautam in his Dharmashastra has assigned six functions to

the Brahman. The first three classes which are called twice-born, have three duties in common: (a) acquisition of learning, (b) performance of sacrifices and worship of the gods and (c) 'Dan'—giving gifts. But this created a problem for the Brahmanas how to maintain themselves and their families. Gautam explains that the Brahmanas should undertake three more functions which can become the source of their livelihood. The work of a teacher and preacher, assistance in the performance of a sacrifice and acceptance of gifts, are allowed to the Brahmanas to make their both ends meet. It will be seen that all these three undertakings can never bring any larger or certain amount of wealth or means of happiness to the Brahmanas. It can never be expected that a Brahman could gather mass of wealth by preaching and teaching, or performing sacrifices, or receiving gifts. The Brahman had to thank himself if he got at least enough to carry on his normal course of life. Compared to the means of livelihood allowed to the Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and Shudras, these three will appear to be very insignificant. While the Brahmanas were desired to be content with what they got, the Kshatriyas were desired to be always ambitious with a will to conquer. The Kshatriyas had, indeed, the world to conquer and rule, and enjoy the pleasures with all the wealth in it. All power over men, and money was reserved for Kshatriyas. The Vaishyas controlled the means of production, agriculture, trade, commerce, and the cattle-wealth; whereas the Shudras were free to show their skill in artisanship, and the social duties and utilities. It will be noticed that except in the case of the Brahman class, nobody else was kept hanging in suspense, or dependent upon the whim and will of the giver. The three categories of work which a Brahman could undertake, were in a sense unproductive. It was not obligatory even on the Brahman to adopt these three means for his livelihood, as it was a rule for others not to abandon these their prescribed obligations. This made the life of a Brahman very hard, but he was expected to go through the ordeal in the pursuit of true knowledge.

In the Gautam Dharma Sutras, there is a list of types of Brahmanas who were considered to be ineligible to receive gifts. Gautam tells us that a Brahman should not be invited

for a dinner simply because he seems to perform the formal duties of a Brahman: (i) A thief who steals anything besides gold (the thief who steals gold is of course excluded as the worst criminal), (ii) a Brahman who is miserably wrecked, (iii) one who is guilty of the five sins, (iv) one who does not have faith in God, (v) one who maintains himself on professions which spread atheism, (vi) one who is accused of murder, (vii) one who performs a Som-bath violating the rules of Shastra, (viii) one who neglects the rule of matrimony in regard to his relations, (ix) one who ministers in the endeavours of women to please their passions, (x) one who does not mind acting as a priest to many, etc., are considered to be the failings of a Brahman from his ideal. The list is so long and so exhaustive, that hardly a Brahman is left with any chance to not only amass wealth, but even to be happy at home. If all these prohibitions are literally observed by a Brahman, there will be, indeed, no instance of him who would be considered to be a creature with the common comforts. So hard and severe was the ideal. This was, in fact, a mirror in which the society was asked to look. Such a Brahman lived and died only for the good of the society. It was indeed this sort of hard and selfless life which the Brahman lived and was considered to have done all that was expected of him in the service of the society and the man. It was on account of this incorruptible noble life which the Brahman lived that he was entrusted with the task of leading the society and in a way was given an unchallengeable authority over the sceptres and the crowns of kings who were enjoined to follow his advice. The kings were directed to protect the class and see that its selfless service of the society was continued unhampered and with ease.

This peculiar convention and code is indicated in the Rig-Veda. A hymn in the Rudra Sukta reveals the Central Power of the Universe as declaring: 'It is I who has given the bow and arrow in the hands of the Rudra, in order to protect the Vedas and the Brahmins, who preserve and protect them.'

अहं रुद्राय धनुरातनोमि ब्रह्मद्विषे शरवे हन्त वा उ ।

विभृयाद् ब्राह्मणान् श्रोत्रियान् ॥

(ब्राह्मणान् ब्रह्मगुणसंपन्नान् श्रोत्रियान् श्रुतिमतः) ॥

(Rig-Veda 10:125, 126).

This poetic imagination, that the Power at the Centre of the Universe arms Rudra, the God of Destruction, with the bow and arrow for the protection of the Brahman, throws sufficient light on the regard which the Brahman class inspired among the people of the Vedic age. What the hymn declares has also been said of the King, who is the representative of the Bharatiyas. While elaborating the duties of the Brahmans, the Gautam Dharma-Sutra enjoins that the King should protect and bear the Brahmans' (G.D.S.C. 9). And the commentator explains the word further as 'the Brahmans, in whom are seen all the qualities and characters of the Brahmanas, and who are indeed learned in the Vedas'.

Plato, the great Greek philosopher had also arrived very near this conclusion that if a nation was to rise to an ideal pattern, then it must have some such class of noble leadership. But what the Bharatiya and Vedic sociologists devised to create such a selfless and noble leadership could not be conceived by the genius of Plato. The result was that in spite of his correct realisation of the need for the creation of such a sacrificing class, he could not suggest as effective and fruitful a formula and a system with the result that his plan proved out to be a miserable flop as admitted by modern critics. It will be pertinent to examine the suggestions of Plato for the evolution of a social structure on which indeed the Western societies are mostly modelled. Plato admits the necessity of a refined and intelligent leadership for the creation of an ideal nation or a State. This class of leaders he names by the term philosophers. If we read the description of Plato's idea of a philosopher, we shall be a little surprised as to how he formed so similar a conception of a philosopher as we find about the Brahman in the Bharatiya thought. One almost feels that Plato is as if pointing to the Brahman class of Bharat. He says: 'Spectator of all time and existence, he has the noblest gifts of nature and

makes the highest use of them. Having attained the knowledge of the true nature of every essence by a sympathetic and kindred power in the soul and having begotten mind and truth, he will have knowledge and will live and grow truly.' This and further descriptions clearly suggest that this Greek genius had also realised the need of Brahmans to mould and civilise a society. Plato's philosopher is expected to be thoroughly aloof and above the influences of objects of senses and unaffected by prejudices and malices. So was the Brahman. It is indeed a happy fact that Plato does not consider the existence of such a class as an accident but within the things of achievement by perfect planning. So had the Vedic society achieved what Plato merely imagined to do. Plato recommends some sort of institution to inculcate a discipline of life and minimum quantum of knowledge to the prospective philosophers on whose breakless tradition and freshness of the flow of new life and thought the perpetual maintenance of the high ideal of a nation is possible. That is indeed the institution of a Brahmacharya in the Chaturvarnya system of the Hindus. Plato conceives of an independent class entrusted with the responsibility of creating and guiding the philosophers, which he calls 'philosopher-guardians'. This is nothing else than the reputed hermitages of the great Vedic Rishis. Plato also concedes certain very fundamental and very consequential difference between the guardians on which the stability of the social structure is to depend. But in spite of these striking similarities there is one fundamental and very consequential difference between the Bharatiya institution of hermitages and Plato's conception of the Philosopher-guardians' class. Plato has confused and mixed the leadership in the fields of politics and social life, whereas the Bharatiya philosophers have very anxiously avoided such an inter-mixture or confusion between the two roles. Plato could not even imagine that the leadership of the society could be detached and made independent from the political power; the eventual possibility of the leadership being corrupted and degraded by the power of purse and politics did not strike Plato's academic mind. The result has been that all the conception of Plato has turned out to be a very fine and captivating piece of poetical ideology but impractical

to be realised in life. Plato is found to plead very emphatically in favour of the leadership in both the fields being in identical hands. There is also the difference in the fact that Plato could not comprehend that moral power bereft of concentration of material and physical strength could exist. What he says is this: 'Until philosophers are kings and princes of the world have the spirit and power of philosophy.... cities will never have rest from their evils.' (*The Republic*, p. 473—Jowett's translation.) Plato has emphatically stated that 'if political power and scientific knowledge (philosophy) are not united in one person, then there is no end of evil for the State and also for mankind in general.' Thus Plato's conception of an ideal Republic must have the 'philosopher-king', as the Supreme Head. Plato was the disciple of Socrates and it is but right that this his theory of the Republic, should have been evolved on the general maxim attributed to his great Master that 'They only shall rule who know.' According to Plato such a philosopher-king will be a perfect personality and 'none of the graces of a beautiful soul are wanting in him'. Such a person will be a synthesis of all the virtues and wisdom and will have more knowledge and anxiety than any one else for the good of the society. So much so that none of his actions could be traced to have any other motive than the good and welfare of the society. In short, such a person could be identified or marked out by the Bharatiya description 'occupied always in the achievement of the good of all the living beings'. Such a person who carries the anxiety of the people and engages himself in attaining it, is naturally expected to know well in what the good lies. He is himself free from the bonds of prescriptions and prohibitions. On the other hand what such a person determines, it turns out to be the law for the people, who have to follow it, if they desire the good and happiness of the community and the nation. Plato's philosopher-king 'is doubly demanded as the only adequate embodiment of the Socratic conception of goodness and also as the authority whose personal insight into good creates the public tradition by which the rest of the society is to live'.

Plato's philosopher-king was not bound by the law as he was

above all sentiments of selfishness which may degrade him in mean actions. After all that is said of the freedom of such a 'philosopher-king' from the laws, it has to be noted that even he must abide by certain fundamentals. Plato's commentators observe: 'The philosopher-king was to be an absolute ruler because he was not to be trammelled by the rigid and clumsy abstractions and generalities of written laws but his absolutism was subject to certain limitations. Freedom from the shackles of written laws did not mean freedom from all restraint. The philosopher-king must respect the fundamental articles of the constitution of the State. He must not radically alter the basic principles on which the State was constituted at his own sweet will. These basic principles which he must not change in hurry, related to (1) regulation of wealth and property in the State, (2) the size of the State, (3) rule of justice in the State, and (4) system of education. Thus even the philosopher-king of Plato was the servant of a fundamental social order.'

Some other commentators however opine that Plato's philosopher needs no such restraints of law, as according to them what is desired to be achieved by these rules and restraints is present in such a philosopher-king inherently.

Plato's ideal social structure is divided in three classes according to their characteristics. These three distinguishing characteristics are almost alike our first three Varnas. Plato arrives at this classification by an analogy with an individual who can be described to possess three distinct characteristics, namely, conscience and moral strength, and action. The social institution can similarly be described to have all these three classes of first the philosopher-kings and philosopher-guardians, the second, namely, the soldiers—who constitute the strength of the society, the warriors and the administrators; and the third the active class is of traders, who produce wealth; and the remainder is the masses or the common society.

Now if we analyse this Plato's conception of the philosopher-king or the guardian, we shall see that the class out of which such a leadership of the society was expected to be evolved was nothing else than the Brahman class of the Bharatiya Chaturvarnya. Plato had apprehended that even if such a class is successfully evolved by a right education, yet it would be very

difficult to keep it aloof or unaffected by the temptations of wealth, attractions of the objects of senses, the passions and pleasures if a very satisfactory arrangement for its worldly life is not made. It would be indeed impossible for the class to maintain its own idealism when threatened by the above facts of life. Plato in his own way suggested a very marvellous and bold remedy, which came to be known as 'a system of communism of property and of wives'. This system of 'communism of property and of wives' was however not meant to be applied to all the society in the Republic as it is to a large extent at present conceived by modern Communism, but only to the first two classes of the Brahman and the Kshatriya the philosopher and the soldier. In Plato's thoughts the ideal republic depended only on these two classes and no consideration was so much necessary of the rest of the society.

Freedom to choose individual profession and the desire to have one's own economic individual life beget individual selfishness and give rise to feelings of narrow individual outlooks and lives. Plato devised to eliminate these thoughts of individualism from the first two classes by his above suggestion. It became necessary to provide a common mess for the class, and Plato did suggest that such a common mess should be run by the administration where all the members of the class could find the boarding. Having got over this difficulty, he had to face the other fact namely of the biological need of the flesh, the urge to mate. It is this feeling or passion that also is one of the primary causes which have produced the sense of individualism and the love for freedom of the self. Plato has equally boldly suggested the maintenance or recognition of a community of wives to satisfy the passions of the class. He holds the view that an individual lives for the State and therefore the woman is the property of the State. The woman class while entering upon the household career should dedicate all that it possesses for the bringing up and happiness of the two most regarded and authentic classes of the society. This according to Plato would solve the problem of individual passions as also it would create an ideal situation in which all the children will be considered as the children of the society and will receive the care, attention

and love of all as it would be impossible to mark out the fatherhood.

Plato's device to merge the social and political leadership in the selfsame individual is itself replete with the seeds of the degeneration of the social leadership. It has been the experience of centuries that the economic ease in life and the passions to which human being is heir to do not so much debase him as do the unchallengeable powers of purse and the political authority. Political power corrupts and degrades a man so much as can never be compared with the evil effects of indulgence in comforts of life and the pursuit of pleasures and passions. It is indeed an un-understandable surprise how a genius like Plato could not comprehend this patent fact. It is more than certain, had he forestalled this danger then he would not have permitted his philosopher-king to be free from rules and restraints of law and justice as he purports to do. What has happened in his giving all the power in the hands of the intellectual class is to almost sponsor and encourage a sort of dictatorship of the might. Is it not difficult to get such a balanced individual whom Plato has in view who would hold the power and the wisdom in perfect poise in his actions and dispensations of law and justice? And because of this truth strange as it is, Plato has in giving out his dream of a philosopher-king, almost prepared a logical background for an all powerful and fascist dictator who would not mind or hesitate to crushing all freedom of expression and thought of an individual! Further it will have been noticed that all the virtues which Plato enumerates for the making of a philosopher-king are so to say personal and psychological. Only mathematics and logic are mentioned principally out of the physical sciences as necessary in the making of the philosopher-king. But it does not need any argument to prove that it is not by the knowledge of these sciences that a good administrator could be produced. For a good administrator, the knowledge of law, economics, military science, etc., etc., are all the more necessary besides the virtues mentioned by him. Plato has forgotten to enumerate these among the necessary equipments of the philosopher prince. He has not even recognised their importance in

the art of administration. Under the circumstance his philosopher-king or administrator will have perforce to become subservient to the mighty individual who may happen to possess the mastery over these branches of learning and knowledge. For the king or the governor would be completely confused for want of this knowledge in the event of some internal disturbance shooting up in the State or some external adversary overtaking it. For all these reasons it is considered to be unwise and impractical to yoke the philosopher class to the daily routine of administration or Government of a State. Jowett rightly observes: 'The philosopher ruler is apt to be looking into the distant future or back into the remote past and unable to see actions and events of the present.'

Now coming to the suggestions which Plato gives to keep this philosopher class out of all temptations one is apt to consider them to be absolutely ridiculous and childish. His remedy of community of property and of wives is on a serious consideration merely absurd. Plato's renowned disciple Aristotle has himself raised very serious objections against his master's ideas. Aristotle raises the following exceptions on his master's concept:

- (1) Real progress of society depends upon cultivation of distinct interests by individuals based on private property;
- (2) There is a natural instinct and pride of ownership;
- (3) Communism of property would destroy the sentiments of charity and benevolence;
- (4) Unity of the State should be promoted by proper education and not by communism which only produces dead uniformity;
- (5) Plato's communism ignores the majority of the citizens and by dividing the State into two communities renders unity and harmony impossible;
- (6) Community of wives will create confusion and disharmony in the social order;
- (7) That children, common to all, are bound to be neglected;
- (8) That unholy acts may be done against near relatives;
- (9) That State-controlled mating will be unworkable and will not bring the best males and females together;

(10) That it is absurd to use the analogy of animals in support of community of wives;

(11) That it will make the guardian class most unhappy;

(12) One female cannot be the wife of all guardians.

If so, this will create disharmony instead of unity. Family is a natural school of moral conduct and a preparation for the State. In the family, duty is learnt the more easily because it is tinged with family affection and personal feelings. Communism of women will destroy temperance, a fundamental element of good character.'

From the above objections which Aristotle, the dear disciple of Plato took against his master's suggestions of 'community of property and of wives' for the building of the ideal class, it will become self-evident how he could not produce a scientific formula to evolve such a class and keep it going on. His suggestions are all very unscientific and impractical.

The Bharatiya philosophers have given very thoughtful consideration to all these pitfalls, and have laid down very wise prescriptions by which they could avoid them. We have discussed all the do's and don'ts for the class and need not repeat the same here. But it must be affirmed that what Plato failed to achieve the Bharatiya philosophers had actually accomplished and kept this ideal of a class before the society for all these millenniums. It will be noted with care that in the Bharatiya thought no person or class was exempted from any rules and regulations which were meant for the good of the whole society and community. It has been the mandate of all the Hindu law-givers that Law must govern all alike. This saved the ideal class from any fall and there never arose any need to defend its degeneration.

There is one exceptional circumstance which is admitted by the Bharatiya thinkers in which some unique individual gets out of all bonds which bind the society without impugment. That stage has been described by poets in a very eloquent phrase: 'For those who roam in spheres which are above and beyond the ties of the three-fold qualities, what prescription or prohibition could bind them?'

न तस्य लोमाऽपिमीयते अपि ब्रह्मवधेन पितृवधेन मातृवधेन ।

The same condition is described in the Upanishads as, 'not even his hair, could be affected even by his murdering a Brahman, his own father, or his mother'. This stage of an individual who is out of all bonds of do's and don'ts, is as will be seen a rare occurrence an uncommon exception hardly witnessed once in three centuries. It has no bearing with the life of the society. On the other hand, it has been warned by the social thinkers that these people should never be considered as ideals to be followed but as exceptions to be avoided. It is considered to be a wise dictum to listen to the advice of the uncommon free souls but not to follow their lives, in as much as that is likely to be contrary to their teachings. Shukadeo observes: 'The words of the masters are indeed truth, but rarely their conduct is consistent with the truth.' A thinker goes to the length of asking: 'If the individual who happens to have acquired self-knowledge behaves without rhyme or reason, what is the difference between him and a dog that gulps up dirty matter.' The purport is to impress that as nobody considers the wallowing in dirt of animals to be a respectable thing, so also the bondless behaviour of the genius should not be taken to be worthy of imitation. If the self-willed conduct of the genius does no harm to him, there is no doubt that such a violation of prescribed rules of the social behaviour will surely be harmful to the society. It is on that account that Shri Krishna puts such a great stress on good behaviour even in the case of a person who is all devoted to the service of humanity or the society. Shri Krishna explained the secret of his life which came to be recognised as the most successful and perfect as it was well-planned and thoughtfully controlled as follows: 'O Arjun, I have nothing to do with or expect from this world; and hence I do not in the least care for it. Is there anything which I have not obtained and which I should long to get from this world? And yet I am always engaged in action; for if I abandon the prescribed actions, then I will turn out to be the cause of chaos and confusion leading to degeneration of the society; I will be instrumental in the total annihilation of the universe.'

न मे पार्थाऽस्ति कर्तव्यं त्रिषु लोकेषु किञ्चन ।

नानवाप्तमवाप्तव्यं वर्त एव च कर्मणि ॥

उत्सीदेयुरिमे लोकाः न कुर्यां कर्म चेदहम् ।

संकरस्य च कर्ता स्यामुपहन्यामिमाः प्रजाः ॥

Shri Krishna further explains: 'If I do not perform my normal functions which have come to be my duty, then surely others will follow my example. Common people generally behave as some high-ups do; that is the general tendency to be seen everywhere.'

यदि ह्यहं न वर्तेयं जातु कर्मण्यतद्रितः ।

मम वर्त्मानुवर्तन्ते मनुष्याः पार्थ सर्वशः ॥

यद्यदाचरति श्रेष्ठः तत्तदेवेतरो जनः ।

स यत्प्रमाणं कुरुते लोकस्तदनुवर्तते ॥

The Bharatiya philosophers unlike their Greek counterparts, considered it very essential to keep every class and every individual in it bound by the rules and regulations, the codes and conventions of good conduct and the laws of the society; and in that they have indeed exhibited a very far-sighted wisdom. The only advice which the Vedic seers gave to the Brahman class was that: 'Acquire knowledge, preserve and maintain your character, and be successful in uprooting the satanic and mean tendencies that crop up in the society.' (R. 8, 35-16). So inviolable was the noble mandate for the Brahmans. It was quite reasonable and necessary to desire the King to maintain such Brahmans who undertook these arduous burdens of social life. The Vedic seers also praised the kings who followed this good rule of supporting the wise Brahmans. The kings were assured of high places in heaven and the admiration of the subjects.

There is one word which needs some more explanation. Rishi is generally conceived to mean a Brahman but that is not very correct. Rishi does not necessarily imply a Brahman. The Rishi is a category of higher types of individuals.

In Vedas the word 'Rishi' when used to denote men means

only the saints. It is not necessary that a person must belong to the Brahman class to rise to sainthood.

From what all we have discussed, it follows that Brahman is a class that is enjoined to suffer and sacrifice throughout his life. It was his ceaseless endeavour to raise the values of life and maintain the ideal which he was asked to place before the common people. The one essential characteristic of the class of ideal Brahman was to live a life thoroughly consistent with the ideology which he was expected to follow, to be true to the principles which he enunciated and never to compromise them for personal comforts or self-aggrandisement. Ceaseless sacrifice is the very symbol of his life. He has to teach every individual the values as well as the different trades and arts of life, but sustain from cashing his own knowledge for his personal profit. He has to find out the ways and means to produce more and more happiness in this world, and show them to the common men, but has as a rule never to practise them for his own ends. He has to act as the loving friend, philosopher and guide to the society, but never to entertain any hopes and expectations of returns for his services, cares and advice. The Bharatiya institutions of state-crafts, kings and councillors, governments and organisations were expected to follow the lines which this Brahman class chalked out for them. They were asked to abide by all the advice which the Brahman gave. What is in modern parlance called 'sovereignty' resided not in the people, or the law, but in this Brahman class which lived every moment of its life in penance and a continuous sacrifice. Here was quite a unique device of the Bharatiya philosophers by which they succeeded in leading and controlling the state and its administration through this selfless class which never wore the crowns nor wielded the sceptres as a rule.

It has been realised by modern sociologists how very essential it is for those who pursue science and knowledge to lead a life of abstinence. Our ancient thinkers had indeed perceived this truth which modern thinkers like Carrel and others are wanting to impress upon us. The result was indeed reflected in the most valuable discoveries and inventions arrived at in different fields of knowledge, sciences and arts credited to the ancient

Bharatiyas. All this was achieved by this class of Brahman, which was always engaged in the pursuit and quest of knowledge and the practice of the highest principles of life. It is no wonder that the class should have gathered universal popularity and acquired for itself a place of honour, confidence and worship. There are scores of historical instances which can illustrate how much the common masses loved and regarded this class which suffered and sacrificed for them. The Vedic legend of the Vasishtha's Cow is one such instance, how when a sceptred king like Vishvamitra with all his military power backing him, began to harass the Sage Vasishtha, the common masses from all the layers of the society ran to protect the Sage and his Cow and defeated and routed the armies of the thoughtless impudent king. The legend tells that the 'Cow' produced the common men to defend her but that is merely a poetical figure of speech to suggest that the common masses marched forward to protect her. In the end the mighty sovereign Vishvamitra had to bend before the armless Sage, exclaiming, 'fie upon this might of the arms and the army; fie upon the prowess of the Kshatriya class; the real strength lies in the spirit of Brahmanhood.'

धिग्बलं क्षत्रियबलं ब्रह्मतेजोबलं बलम् ।

It is this class which kept the idealism and the essence of the Bharatiya philosophy ever aglow for all these millenniums. Rightly does the Vedic Sage pray: 'May the Brahmans in this society ever shine with the lustre of their penance and sacrifice.'

अस्मिन् राष्ट्रे आब्राह्मन् ब्राह्मणो ब्रह्मवर्चसी जायताम् ॥

CHAPTER XX

THE KSHATRIYA—RULER—PROTECTOR

WE have presented in the last chapter the ideal of the Brahman class which performed the most difficult task of leading the society for millenniums and evolving the miracle of the culture and civilisation of the Vedic Aryas. The ideal and the class which worshipped it were both very high moralistically and they did indeed influence the character and careers of the other classes in the society. They were, however, not strong enough to protect and defend physically themselves or their society. It is a truism that the section of a society which is dedicated to the ceaseless quest of the permanent and fundamental values cannot also be expected to look to the task of its physical defence. This intellectual section always stands in the need of a protector, as much as their society does. It is hardly ever possible in this universe of inequality and beastly cruelty to remain unassailed simply on the merit of the high morals and noble ideals. Vyas has rightly observed: 'The study and search of sciences and knowledge can only go on in a nation which is well protected by arms and weapons.'

शस्त्रेण रक्षिते राष्ट्रे शास्त्रचिन्ता प्रवर्तते ।

This strength of arms is necessary not merely to defend a nation from the external invasions but equally to maintain a stable administration in the State and a disciplined order in the society, in which condition only, the people march towards progress. In some form or the other, in every epoch, a strong power is indispensable for good rule. The ancient Bharatīyas had recognised the truth and the need of such a strong force behind the ruler or the king. The Mahabharat lays down in this connection:

'When this strong arm of the Kshatriyas weakens, the influence of the Veda-trayi withers away and the laws become ineffective; or when the Kshatriyas abandon the obligations of the rulership all the arrangements of the classes and the stages of life also become loose; in the obligations of rulership are based many estimable values and merits of the social life; the

rulership is the prime support of all learning, indeed the whole society stands safe and stable in the right fulfilment of the obligations of the rulership.'

“ मज्जेत् त्रयी दण्डनीतौ हतायां सर्वे धर्माः प्रक्षयेयुर्दिग्धाः ।

सर्वे धर्माः चाश्रमाणां हताः स्युः क्षात्रे त्यक्ते राजधर्मे पुराणे ॥

सर्वे त्यागा राजधर्मेषु दृष्टाः सर्वा दीक्षा राजधर्मेषु युक्ताः ।

सर्वा विद्या राजधर्मेषु चोक्ताः सर्वे लोका राजधर्मे प्रविष्टाः ॥

(Shanti 63/28-29)

Such is the great significance of the strong arm behind the rulership. History illustrates very clearly how those who disregarded or did not recognise this truth, not only lost themselves, but ruined their nations. All values of life can be appreciated and established if they are backed by a strong and invincible power behind them. Manu has analysed the complicated working of the universe exhibiting the triple properties of 'Satva, Raja and Tama' and chiefly, the character which is dominated by or rooted in the baser instincts called 'Tama'. He says:

'All are controlled by the fear of punishment; it is hard to find a man who is intrinsically good by self-volition. In fact all the people surrender before the strong. Not only men, but the gods, the demons, the celestial beings, birds, beasts, and the crawling animals, all, without exception, remain within their bounds only on account of the fear of punishment. Where the strong arm of the ruler is alert and watchful, there never arises any doubt or hesitation about the duties and obligations in the minds of the subjects. But it is of course necessary that the arm that rules must also be thoughtful and wise to guide the people on the proper path.'

सर्वो दण्डजितो लोको दुर्लभो हि शुचिर्नरः ।

दण्डस्य हि भयात्सर्वं जगद् भोगाय कल्पते ॥ २२ ॥

देवदानक्यन्धर्वः रक्षांसि पतंगोरगाः ।

तेऽपि भोगाय कल्पन्ते दण्डेनैव निपीडिताः ॥ २३ ॥

यत्र श्यामो लोहिताक्षो दण्डश्चरति पापहा ।

प्रजास्तत्र न मुह्यन्ति नेता चेत्साधु पश्यति ॥ २५ ॥

(Manusmriti 7/22, 23, 25)

The Kamandakiya has also emphasised the significance of the power of the rod in the hands of the ruler in the following terms:

‘All the learning and sciences are a part or dependent on the three main learnings, namely, self-knowledge based on logic, the knowledge of the Vedas, and the science of economics. But if the rule of the State becomes disturbed, then all these learnings and lores, however real they may be, become as useless as unreal things. It is only when the rule of the State is well managed by wise and foreseeing leadership, that all these learnings turn useful and the learned scholars can devote their attention to the gathering of knowledge and worshipping the Vidyas.’

आन्वीक्षिकी त्रयी वार्ता सतीर्विद्याः प्रचक्षते ।

सत्योऽपि हि न सत्यस्ता दण्डनीतेस्तु विप्लवे ॥

दण्डनीतिर्यदा सम्यङ् नेतारमधिष्ठति ।

तदा विद्याविदः शेषा विद्याः सम्यगुपासते ॥

It is obvious the strong arm behind the rulers was considered to be *sine-qua-non* not only for the defence and protection of the society from external aggressions but also for the maintenance of peaceful order and a continued progress in it.

दण्डयः पुरुषः दण्डमर्हतीति वा दण्डेन संपद्यते इति वा । दण्डो ददतेर्धारयति कर्मणः ‘अकूरोददतेमणिम्’ इत्यभिभाषन्ते । दमनादिलौपमन्यवः ।

(Nirukta)

Nirukta explains the word ‘dand’ in both the ways, viz: ‘punishment which prevents a man from committing crimes and sins’ as well as ‘which maintains him on the path of morality and order’.

In the Bharatiya science of administration of a State or a kingdom, this interpretation of the word is emphasised. ‘Dand’ according to Bharatiya political science means administration and the ‘Danda-niti’ means ‘administration by law or justice’. The Bharatiya political science admits punishment, justified by law and logic as an adequate principle and policy of statecraft. This rule of lawful punishment is upheld by the power of the State; and the power resided in the institu-

tion of kingship. This institution of kingship was evolved from the class of the Kshatriyas, the warriors. It is this Kshatriya Varna which is the second constituent of the structure of the Bharatiya society.

The Kshatriya Varna was created by the first class of Brahmans, for the purpose of protection of the society and maintenance of the social order in the nation. The Shatapatha Brahman reveals: 'There was only one Varna, that of the Brahmanas in the beginning. That however could not make the social existence complete and perfect. The Brahmanas therefore devised this Kshatriya Varna for the attainment of greater welfare of the society. The God-heads like Indra, Varuna, Soma, Rudra, Parjanya, Yama, Ishana, etc., who came to life, all belong to the Kshatriya class. There is nothing higher and superior to this class. For that reason even the Brahman stands on the ground before the Kshatriya sitting on a higher throne in the performance of the Rajasuya Yajna. That honour and merit is deserved only by the Kshatriya. Nevertheless, it is the Brahman who created this class and therefore the Kshatriya must depend upon his creator which is the source of his power and inspiration.'

ब्रह्म वा इदमग्र आसीदेकमेव, तदेकं सन्न व्यभवत् । तच्छ्रेयोरूप-
मल्यसृजत क्षत्रं, यान्येतानि देवता क्षत्राणीन्द्रो वरुणः सोमो रुद्रः पर्जन्यो यमो
मृत्युरीशान इति । तस्मात्क्षत्रात्परं नास्ति । तस्माद् ब्राह्मणः क्षत्रियमवस्तादुपास्ते
राज्यसूये । क्षत्र एव तद्यशो दधाति । सैषा क्षत्रस्य योनिर्यद् ब्रह्म । तस्माद्यद्यपि
राजा परमतां गच्छति, ब्रह्मैवान्तत उपनिश्रयति स्वां योनिम् ।

It is a self-evident fact of history that wars are inevitable. Wars are not caused merely by external circumstances. They are as much the result of internal conditions of the society and the psychological attitudes of men in it. More often than not it is the strong whims or ambitions of individuals which have caused great wars, in which the societies and nations are dragged, may be, at times against their will. It is not necessary here to analyse and enumerate the effective causes which occasion wars. Some trifling cause brings a strife in the society or invites one nation against the other in a murderous war. In both the events, the society has to be protected from

the vicissitudes of war. No society, much less a nation can dispense with an army. A wisely governed State always provides itself with a strong and alert force, ever-ready to quell internal disturbances or defeat external aggressions. This need was recognised since earliest times. The Aitareya Brahmana recounts in its description of the feud between the divine beings and the demons, this very truth. The Brahman says: 'There continued a constant feud between the gods and the demons. The demons were generally always victorious. The gods once deliberated on this their perpetual defeat and traced its cause. They discovered that they had no one leader to guide their plans and get them executed. That was the cause of their repeated defeats in spite of their strength. They therefore decided to elect someone as their leader, a king.'

देवासुरा वा एषु लोकेषु समयतन्त.....तांस्ततोऽसुरा अजयन्.. ...

देवा अमुवन्थराजतया देवो जयति राजानंकरवामहाइति तथेति ।

Whether a nation is at war or peace, a standing army with a trained and skilful leadership is always necessary. The Bharatiya people having recognised this social need devised a unique plan to fulfil it. Unlike modern nations, which try to inculcate militarist attitude and fighting spirit amongst their citizens, the Bharatiyas created a special class to perform this function as a social obligation. If we compare the advantages of these classwise functions with the classless obligations, it will be readily accepted that there are more excellent points in the Bharatiya practice than in the Western or modern systems. In the Bharatiya ideology it becomes possible to imbibe the necessary spirit and mentality amongst the members of the class, leaving other classes always free to pursue their courses and careers as they like. While doing this the Bharatiya philosophers always took care that they never encouraged the curseful concepts which have become incidental in other systems. The children of the class were brought up in an atmosphere which nursed in them an indomitable will to conquer without fear or qualms about the necessity of violence and bloodshed in the act of self-defence. They were taught that fighting was their profession and dying for the nation on the battlefield a necessity. This class which was designed to

rule the country, to conquer new lands, was not taught to renounce the worldly pleasures which wealth and power could secure. Of necessity, the two classes, the Brahmanas and the Kshatriyas required a different bearing and breeding. So also the training of a Kshatriya differed from that of a Vaishya, the trader who was assigned the task of creating and collecting wealth and distributing it amongst the people. Paradoxical it may appear, but it is a truth that the ideals which were kept before the classes were different so as to provide the different needs and functions of the society to make it whole and self-sufficient. The Bharatiya social philosophers took into consideration the different needs of the society and devised measures to provide them through the instrument of the four classes which made it a perfect and harmonious institution. The military spirit was therefore thought to be an essential virtue of the Kshatriya class. It must not however be supposed that the other classes were prohibited from learning the arts of war. It will be noted that the Shudra who had been forbidden to study the Vedas, had not been prohibited from learning the art of using the bow and arrow, taught in the Dhanurveda. It is amusing to note that even a Shudra was prescribed initiation for the learning of the Dhanurveda. It is indeed a wise provision in as much as the ancient law-givers recognised the need of mobilising the whole society in the event of external aggression. Vyasa exhorts Yudhishtir to remember: 'Whenever the enemy breaks all bonds, and assails your territory, it becomes the duty of every citizen to arm himself and rush to the battlefield for the defence of his people and country.'

अमयदि प्रवृत्ते च शत्रुभिस्संगरे कृते ।

सर्वे वर्णाश्च दृश्येयुः शस्त्रवन्तो युधिष्ठिर ॥

This mandate to all the classes including the Shudras to take to arms is of course in an exceptional circumstance when the country is in danger. It is quite a different thing to prepare and train a class for military careers in the normal times. Recognising this difference, the Vedic thinkers devised a special class intended for martial career. On this defined and determined section of the society rested the responsibility of defending it and preserving peace and order in the country.

It was felt necessary to inculcate some special virtues and martial spirit in the members of this class. The rule of conscription was indeed prevalent in Bharat, but only so far as the members of this Kshatriya class was concerned. This class had to undergo all the discipline, the experience of hard life and imbibe the spirit of a soldier to sacrifice his life for the cause of his motherland.

The class which was so prepared was called the Kshatriya. The result of this exclusive device was to keep the peaceful sections of the society engaged in civil and cultural activities completely aloof and unconcerned with the rigours and anxieties of the fighting forces. This was a startling experiment of Bharat unseen in any other society in the world. The foreign travellers who observed this wonderful arrangement into classes of the society which prevailed intact upto the days of Chandragupta Maurya, have recorded their supreme appreciation of the social device. They were struck with the sights of battles and the preparations for them on war-basis going on one side, and the continuance of a peaceful, undisturbed life of the society on the other. This helped to keep the social progress unaffected and uninterfered with a guarantee of stability, as also an assurance that the class which was entrusted to defend their homes and homelands was performing its obligation as devotedly. The non-combatant people always regarded the class which fought for them, for their homes and gods, with utmost regard. This class which had willingly offered to sacrifice its lives in the performance of its obligations was rewarded by the social system with the highest places of honour and joys of life which were reserved for them. There never appeared to be any rivalry and jealousy amongst the rest of the society for the benefits and privileges of life which this class secured in appreciation of their inestimable performance of the defence of the realm. The class was honoured next to the class which guided and moulded the civil and cultural life of the society. But, in practice, this class enjoyed greater privileges, concessions, joys of life, pomp and power than the first class which was prohibited from enjoying these benefits and blessings. This class of Kshatriyas acted as a balancing factor in the social system which preserved not only the moral

values of life but helped the physical progress of the society. The opinion of Megasthenese is well known that there was no reason for fear of the social life in Bharat to be disturbed by the great wars that occasionally rise in the country.

It will be interesting now to note how this class was initiated in its functions. It is a common phenomenon with all the ancient societies in the world that there were in every nation heroic tribes which lived by their arms. The war tendency being natural to humankind such an armed force became a standing necessity of the society. The nation which did not provide for such an eventuality for the protection of the society found it difficult to survive. It is a startling lesson of history that such a great nation of philosophers and warriors like Greece became disintegrated, and disappeared from the surface of the globe. The Rig-Veda on the other hand, categorically warns that the people who are unarmed, are cursed by misfortunes and miseries. In this lies the reason behind the creation of the class of Kshatriya. It is a distinct merit of the Kshatriya class of Bharat that it did not permit its prowess to descend to the beastly behaviour. The Kshatriya class always rose above the brute in man even in the triumphant hour. This class endeavoured to rise above the animal instincts and respected the human values in all their behaviour. On comparison of the Kshatriyas of Bharat with most heroic and successful military tribes and personalities, it will be seen that the Bharatiya heroes were more humane than their Western counterparts. There is no doubt that the discipline and the military spirit which were inculcated in the Bharatiya people were of more valuable essence from the point of human consideration in comparison with the character of the other military tribes.

The Vedic thinkers invigorated the martial spirit amongst the members of the Kshatriya class. But, they never allowed the foundation of human considerations to become loose in the minds of the warriors. It will be noted that while the Kshatriya class has been advised to be cool and collected, tolerant and impartial to all, it has never been permitted to renounce its military role or to abandon and escape from its responsibility to govern. The fourth stage of Hindu life, viz.,

Sanyas, is denied to the Kshatriyas. The Kshatriyas have been advised never to become recluses or mendicants. For them the injunction was not to enjoy what they do not secure by their own prowess. If a soldier were to engage himself in meditation or imbibe an attitude of escapism and tolerance of injustice who would come forward to defend the nation or to protect the weak and unarmed in the society? For this consideration the fourth stage of Sanyas, renunciation, has been prohibited to the Kshatriya class.

It may be asked here, was the Kshatriya deprived of the solace of eternal freedom which is generally supposed to be the fruit of renunciation? It is wrong to suppose like that. The measure and means of the attainment of eternal bliss differed according to classes. The Vedic thinkers have laid down expressly that a warrior who meets with death while fighting face-to-face with his enemy secures a place in heaven, meaning the eternal bliss. It is said that both a Sanyasi who renounces the world and engages himself in the practice of the Yoga, as well as a soldier who falls on the battlefield in his fight with the enemy, both cross the region beyond the solar system and acquire perfect bliss. It is ingrained in the Kshatriya's mind that death on the battlefield is the greatest glory a Kshatriya can achieve.

It will be interesting to note here how far this faith was infused in the warrior class. It is said that the mothers of killed warriors used to visit the battlefields in order to find out if their sons had died of wounds on the chests or the backs. If the wound was in the back, that was considered to be shameful and the mother would cut off her breast to declare that it was a disgrace on her. So many stories of lamenting mothers are current in Bharatiya legends telling us how the heroic kind grieved that they had no sons to be sent to the battlefield, when the honour of their country and gods was at stake. The Rig-Veda has an inspiring passage reverberating with such a sentiment.

A Rig-Vedic bard declares: 'A hero who is armed with weapons, who is unassailable by the enemy, whose appearance on the battlefield strikes terror in the adversary, only such an invincible warrior acquires all the wealths and honour.'

शूरग्रामः सर्ववीरः सहावान् जेता पवस्व सनिता धनानि ।

तिग्मायुधः क्षिप्रधन्वा समत्स्वसाहः साह्वान् पृतनासु शत्रून् ॥

(Rig-Veda 9-90-3)

All these sentiments which infused the martial spirit amongst the youths of the Kshatriya class, only go to show how hard was the expectation of the society from this class. War was considered to be a golden opportunity for the exhibition of the heroic spirit. It is the wars which have produced the great heroes in Bharat. It was but natural that the warrior who came out as the invincible hero, was regarded with the highest honours. Only such a person was conferred upon epithets like, 'brave', 'heroic', 'a charioteer', 'a great charioteer', etc., which reflect the prowess of the warrior.

There are innumerable descriptions of different categories of warriors and their merits. It should not be forgotten however that while the heroism of a warrior was extolled by the historians, they never encouraged the degradation of their heroes into heartless brutes like Chengis Khan, Temur Lang or the Mohammed of Ghazni.

Bharat produced ideal warriors since the days of Rama right upto the age of Shivaji who never disgraced their prowess or profession by descending to brutish behaviour. How this virtue of bravery without beastliness was nourished in Bharat, deserves to be minutely studied. It was the sagacious code of behaviour for the soldiers that evolved a nobility of character in them. These conventions which assumed the course of prescription were hardly ever violated by the Bharatiya heroes. A soldier was forbidden to attack his adversary who was unarmed, unprotected with the armour, or the helmet. It was a convention that a soldier should fight duels and none would be overpowered by groups. It may be considered ridiculous today, but in the age it was a wise rule that when an adversary was exhausted, he should be allowed to rest. In the duel between Rama and Ravana, it is narrated, Rama allowed Ravana to retire when the latter broke down with exhaustion. There was a rule that the duels should be fought with the same identical weapons. A swordsman could not fight with a charioteer or a club-man. When the adversary got vanquished,

came in difficulty, or wanted to retire, he was never overpowered. Weapons like poisoned arrows were forbidden. These were considered to be the instruments only of the wicked. It was a common sight to see the duels and battles being stopped when the adversary broke his weapon or lost his armour or helmet or when he abandoned the fight. If during the course of the fight, a Brahman came in to bring about a rapprochement or compromise, the fight was stopped and the Brahman was never injured.

The warriors who fell on the battlefields were considered to be very lucky to have met an honourable death. Nobody lamented over their death. The strictest convention was a non-combatant, an old man, a woman or a child, a preceptor or an insane person was never molested. It was thought to be a mean and shameful act on the part of a warrior to stab his adversary in the back, to hit him below the belt or to pursue the fleeing enemy. A warrior never thought it dignified to attack and kill men from the enemy camp who were searching for food and water, engaged in drinking, or eating, or asleep in their camps. The non-fighting population was at all times spared even by the conquering hordes. The above conventions were derived from the rules laid down in the law books. The Gautam Dharma-shastra specifically enumerates the 'do's and don'ts.

'There is no blame in violence on the battlefield, but it is wrong to kill the following: a warrior whose horse it lost, a charioteer whose chariot is broken, a soldier without an arm or one who is surrendering with joined hands, a person who is out of senses, one who has turned his face away from the battlefield, one who is seated on the ground or has climbed on the tree-tops for shelter, one who declares himself to be an ambassador or any one who is afflicted and begs for protection.'

न दोषो हिंसाभांमाहवे ॥ 16 ॥ अन्यत्र व्यश्वसारध्यायुधकृताञ्जलि-
प्रकीर्णकेशपराङ्मुखोपविष्टस्थलवृक्षारूढदूतगोब्राह्मणवादिभ्यः ॥ 17 ॥

(Gauntam Dharmasutra 10:16-17)

These rules are not mere enumerations, but were expressly followed in practice. From the evidence of Megasthenes who was an ambassador in the court of Chandragupta Maurya in

the 4th century B.C., the state of affairs and the sacred code of soldiers becomes proved beyond all doubts. Megasthenes records: 'Whereas among other nations, it is usual in the contests of war, to ravage the soil and thus reduce it to an uncultivable waste, among the Indians on the contrary, by whom husbandmen are regarded as a class that is sacred and inviolable, the tillers of the soil even when the battle is raging within their neighbourhood are undisturbed by any sense of danger for the combatants on either side in waging the conflict make carnage of each other, but allow those engaged in husbandry to remain quite unmolested. Besides, they neither ravage an enemy's land with fire, nor cut down its trees; nor would an enemy coming upon a husbandman at work on land do him harm for men of this class being regarded as public benefactors are protected from all injuries.'

If we compare this high sense of regard for human life and civilisation which the Bharatiya philosophers impressed upon the warrior class, with the present outlook, and the methods of the modern warfare, the difference will be quite astounding. If the Bharatiya warrior class regarded human life and civilisation with utmost value, the modern leaders of nations seem to be totally unmindful about the same. The dropping of the atom bomb on the Japanese towns to frighten the fighting adversary with the destructive power of the modern weapons, is nothing short of a brute psychology which was unknown in Bharat. The father of the atom formula, Dr. Einstein had indeed advised President Truman to drop the bomb in a deserted place to impress upon the Japanese nation with the devastating power which it possessed. But, disregarding this noble advice of a sage, President Truman destroyed two Japanese cities by which he has proved how separated by poles are the two, namely, humanity and civilisation in modern times. The Bharatiya philosophers did raise a fighting class. But there was nothing disgraceful or degrading to the human sense and spirit in it, as is betrayed in the modern system of war. How that ideal system of warfare and the warrior class were evolved deserves our further attention.

It has been a dictum of Hindu philosophy that all men are born equal. It is only by their actions that they rise or fall in

the four **general classes**. It is the initiation and cultivation of a character and qualities which make a man a Brahman or a Kshatriya. Mere birth does not qualify the person to the class privileges, rights and responsibilities. Like the Brahman, a Kshatriya has also to undergo initiation and intensive training to make him competent for the profession he has to adopt. A Kshatriya child was taken to his guru for initiation ceremony in his eleventh year. In more remote times the Kshatriya boy had to stay in the ashram of his guru all through his training period. But later on when the duties and functions of a Kshatriya narrowed down to military activities, the Kshatriya child returned home and learnt the art of handling weapons and of warfare. Slowly the initiation ceremony became merely a formal one, and the age of initiation was also prolonged. In the further passage of time, even this formal ceremony was totally ignored. What difficulties this deviation from prescribed rites of a class created can be very well understood from the story of Shivaji's life. This prince, after he had carved out his kingdom, wanted to crown himself, in order to secure the public sanction as a recognised king of the country. First there was a doubt about Shivaji's Kshatriya class without which tradition refused to confer kingship on a person. When this doubt was removed, another serious hurdle in the crowning sacrament cropped up. According to the rules of Hindu Law, a crowning ceremony could not be performed in the case of a person whose initiation was not done. The initiation has to be performed in boyhood before marriage; but Shivaji was a married man. There was no solution to this impossible position. In the circumstance the greatest authority on Hindu Law of the times, Ganga Bhatt, declared that though the traditional Upanayan could not be performed in the case of Shivaji, it could certainly go as an accompanying rite with the crowning sacrament. The difficulty was overcome. The story illustrates how essential was the Upanayan even in the case of a Kshatriya boy.

With a slight difference the Kshatriya child was initiated just like a Brahman brahmachari. In the case of the Kshatriya child, it was not the string of Munj grass, but the twine of the bow, which was tied round his waist. The Kshatriya child

had to use a deer hide and the stick of the Ashwatha tree. These small variations in the material and the manner in the Upanayan ceremony of a Kshatriya were also with calculated purpose of impressing the child with the responsibilities and obligations of his high calling. The Ashwatha tree is considered to be sacred to Lord Vishnu who is the great protector of the Universe. The stick of this tree in the hands of a Kshatriya brahmachari always reminded him of his obligation to be ever-ready for the defence and protection of his subjects.

A Kshatriya child who was thus initiated had to undergo a strenuous routine. He had to perform the worship of the fire, offer his prayers, invoke the Sun by recanting the Savitri Mantra which differed from the Gayatri Mantra of the Brahmin brahmachari. This mantra is in the Trishtubh Meter and means to remind the reciter 'through what difficulties and darkness every day the Sun has to traverse through the skies in order to give light and life to the Universe'. The mantra actually says: 'Here comes the shining Sun in his golden chariot, through the dark skies rousing the animate and inanimate universe into action.' The mantra is symbolic of the ideal which was kept before the mind of the Kshatriya child.

The Kshatriya boy had to mainly learn the art of weapons which was called Dhanurvedya. The 'bow and arrow' is symbolic of the arms and weapons. In the morning, the child took lessons in the use of arms and weapons; in the afternoon history and allied sciences were taught to the child. With the introduction of the three Vedas, a little of mathematics, philosophy, logic, economics and politics were the main items of education of a Kshatriya child. For the education of the children in the ashramas, there were special classes of bards—Suta—which had to narrate the glorious histories of the dynasties and their conquests of the four directions. In the evening and at night a Kshatriya child was given important lessons and practical secrets by the preceptor.

The Dhanurvedya or the science of weapons and warfare was founded by the great Kshatriya Vishwamitra who later on attained the status of a Brahman. The Dhanurvedya was divided in four parts known as: (1) 'Deekshapada', (2) 'Sangraha',

(3) 'Siddhi', and (4) 'Prayog'. These four divisions taught a pupil lessons in the arms, their collection, mastery over them and lastly their use. The arms and weapons in those days were classified into four groups: (1) Mukta, (2) Amukta, (3) Mukta-mukta, and (4) Yantramukta, according to how they were used; some of them being freely hurled at the enemy; some being held in the hand and used for attack; and some being propelled by mechanism or machines. The initiation and training in the use of all kinds of arms is the subject of the Dhanurveda. Emphasis of the Vedic social philosopher was on the creation of Kshatriyas who were masters in the art of weapons, who were intrepid heroes, and invincible charioteers.

A Kshatriya that had been so intensively trained in the 'ashram' was then expected to work under some accomplished generals and masters of different learnings. The object was to give chances to the Kshatriya youth to practise the knowledge and art which he had learnt in the ashram. This training of a Kshatriya boy started with the initiation in the eleventh, or in further remote times in the sixteenth year. Historical instances from the Puranas illustrate this fact. For instance, when Vishwamitra approached King Dasharatha with a request to send Rama to his 'ashram' for the protection of his sacrifice, Dasharatha is reported to have said: 'O sage, how can I send my beloved Rama to undertake the defence of your ashram from the Rakshasas when he has not attained even his sixteenth year.' It may also be noted here that Abhimanyu, the son of that great archer Arjuna, could earn the distinction of being a 'Maharathi', great charioteer, even in his sixteenth year. Abhimanyu was a married man at that age. He was killed by treachery. Some scholars opine that the sixteenth year was counted from the Upanayan ceremony which would make Abhimanyu's age to be 24. But if the same argument is applied in the case of Rama, then the fallacy would be apparent, King Dasharatha's words that Rama is not even sixteen would be meaningless. Generally therefore a Kshatriya youth became eligible to enter into active profession of his class in the sixteenth year. When the Kshatriya boy had thus mastered the art of weapons and warfare and had been initiated in the art of government as well as in the rudiments of

knowledge necessary for his calling, the preceptor would give a send-off to his Kshatriya pupil. On the occasion the preceptor tied a sword round the waist of his pupil and exhorted him to be devoted to his profession, to protect the subjects, to perform the sacrifices, to give alms to the deserving and to enjoy all the pleasures of life without getting madly attached to them.

The law demanded that a Kshatriya must never take up to any other profession, except the soldier's for his livelihood. He must never shun a battlefield nor run away in the midst of action. He was in duty bound to serve his king and the country and in that lies the fruitfulness of his life.

This is how the Bharatiya philosophers evolved a unique device by which a strong army for the protection of the people and their country was successfully created. While this special class of the defenders of the nation was brought up by a course of intensive training and discipline, the inculcation of cherished character and a type of culture were never lost sight of. The leaders did not forget to provide for natural checks and controls on the tendency which the possession of invincible might was likely to produce in the warrior-rulers. It was their anxiety on the one hand to nourish unconquerable physical strength in the Kshatriya class, and on the other to divest it of the inhuman brutality which invariably accompanies the physical might. This they achieved by another formula. The Kshatriya was made subordinate to and a supplement of the spiritual Brahman. It was the harmonious association of the spiritual and selfless attitude towards the society, with the ever-alert physical strength that made the nation march towards progress. The Mahabharata says: 'The Brahmanas are the rich mines of intelligence, wisdom and the spirit of sacrifice. The Kshatriyas acquire physical strength and mastery over arms and weapons. It is only in the union of the moral and the physical powers that the peace and prosperity of a nation can be achieved.'

The Brahmanas could not pursue their search for truth and a life of selfless sacrifice without the protection of this strong arm of the Kshatriyas. Nor could the might of the Kshatriyas alone climb to the heights of culture and civilisa-

tion. A perfect co-operation of both the moral and the physical is indispensable. The Gautama Dharma Sutra observes: 'When the Kshatriyas abide by the directions of the Brahmana and follow the moral path, they acquire prosperity and the Brahmanas, when they are assured security and stability for their intellectual pursuits, can take the society to nobler heights of civilization. (11-16/29)

तपो मंत्रबले नित्यं ब्राह्मणेषु प्रतिष्ठितम् ।

अस्त्रबाहुबले नित्यं क्षत्रियेषु प्रतिष्ठितम् ॥

नाग्रह क्षत्रमुध्नोति नाक्षत्रे ब्रह्म वर्धते ।

ब्रह्मक्षत्रे च संपुक्तं इह चामुत्र वर्धते ॥

The Ramayana also confirms the view that there must be a perfect unity and co-operation between the Kshatriya class and the Brahman head, for the nation to become perfect. It was a happy amalgam of the right and might that Bharat became great and produced such superhuman beings like Rama, Krishna, Bhishma, etc. It was on account of the moral control exercised by the intellectual Brahman that the Kshatriyas turned out to be supermen and not the titans. As long as Bharat respected this traditional arrangement of unity between the head and the arms, the Brahman and the Kshatriya making the national person, there was endless 'excelsiour' towards the heights of civilization. This continued for milleniums. There was not any challenge or threat to either the philosophers or the princes who ruled over the country. But this long state of peace and prosperity wrought its curse. With the passage of time, the Kshatriya class had become, for want of any struggle, totally indulgent either in the enjoyment of the joys of life ushering the evils which follow in the wake of social degeneration, or being satiated with pleasures they embraced the courses of renunciations, as an escape from and change of life. The Kshatriya class became indifferent and oblivious of the obligations of its profession. Instead of worshipping the weapons, they abandoned them. They were tempted to retire to forests in seclusion. They forgot the lessons and the duties prescribed to them by their respected preceptors and philosophers. The Vedic mandate for performance of the functions of the class was ignored. It is a historical fact that this lapse from the

class obligations first arose in the Kshatriya class. There may be reasons for the Kshatriyas to get disgusted with the Brahman class. But, instead of trying to remove the defects which capacity and power the ruling class had in its hands, the Kshatriyas repudiated the tradition. This revolt against the tradition was first spearheaded by the rise of Mahaveer and Gautama Buddha both from the princely order.

There is in the current decade a revival of the respect for these two rebels from the traditional Vedic philosophy. We have nothing to say against either the greatness of these founders of faiths or the contents of the philosophies preached by them. But we cannot refrain from saying that these two were the first rebels who caused the break-up of the Vedic tradition which invited indeed a deterioration in the Bharatiya nation. Had these two great persons preached what they did which was not something new or inconsistent with the Vedic thought, by remaining in the social order instead of creating a breach in it, they would have saved and strengthened the nation. Instead shirking the obligations of kingship, these princes adopted the career of recluses in orange-clothes and started the break-up of the social order. Had they resorted to the forests individually no much damage would have been made. But they preached this their device of escapism from the responsibilities and obligations of national life to the Kshatriya and Vaishya classes turning them into mendicants with begging bowls in their hands. It was Gautama Buddha who as it were opened the first flood gate for the Kshatriya class to escape from its prescribed obligations within the social structure of the day. It cannot be gainsaid that it was Buddha who preached a code of conduct and an ideology to the society which resulted in the break of the unity and solidarity of the Bharatiya nationhood. It was he who first struck a hammer blow on the steel frame of the Varna and Ashram system which had been very ingeniously devised by the Bharatiya philosophers. The fateful consequences of this break-up are too well known to be told here. Shri Ramachandra Dikshitar, while reviewing the roles of Buddha and Mahaveera says:

‘There is a definite ordinance of the ancient law books;

prohibiting the warrior-caste from taking to asceticism. Only the Brahmans may resort to asceticism, because the Kshatriyas may neither want nor receive a gift. The very nature of a Sanyasi is to beg; hence he is called a Bhikku. Action not renunciation, is the watch-word of the Kshatriya. It was realised that if this were allowed, the Kshatriyas would become philosophers rather than warriors and that would result in the deterioration of manpower in the land. Therefore a warrior was not generally allowed to don the robes of an ascetic. But, Mahaveera and Gautama protested against these injunctions and inaugurated an order of monks or Sanyasins. When these dissenting seeds gathered in strength and numbers, the decline of Kshatriya valour set in. Once they were initiated into a life of peace and prayer they preferred it to the horrors of war. This was the service that the dissenting saints did to the cause of ancient India.'

—(*War in Ancient India*, p. 55.)

The pioneers of the Vedic nation had successfully evolved a unique organisation of the Kshatriya class which ran the 'institution of kingship' and managed the affairs of the State. Let us now turn to the organisation, the nature and scope of the institution of kingship and the conduct of the statecraft.

CHAPTER XXI

THE STATE AND THE INSTITUTION OF KINGSHIP IN THE VEDIC AGE

- ✓THE Bharatiya sociologists have since very early days denounced the state of anarchy. Since very ancient times the institution of kingship came to be regarded highly by the Bharatiya people.
- ✓Between a kingless State and one badly governed by a king the Bharatiya mind preferred the latter. That is how one can explain why the sages chose to place so bad a king like Vena on the throne. The Bhagwat Puran asserts: 'The Rishis placed the undeserving Vena on the throne only on account of the fear of anarchy.'

भराजकभयादेवकृतो राजाऽतदर्हणः ।

A kingless State in those days meant a chaotic condition of administration, which was supposed to lead to total ruin of the nation. An orderly rule by the institution of a kingship had come to stay as the only efficacious form of Government capable of protection of the society, its all round progress, maintenance of peace and its march towards culture and civilisation. This was possible only under the rule of law backed by the strong arm of the ruler to punish the offenders. While the Kshatriya class was created as a strong arm of the nation, the kingship came to be evolved as the symbol of power. Manu explains how this institution of kingship arose in this land in ancient times. He says:

'When all the people were frightened by anarchy and chaos that prevailed and when they began to disintegrate and flee away, the Almighty raised a king. For that king, the representative of the divine, and the protector of the people, the Almighty produced a sceptre which was at once a weapon of power and a symbol of law and justice.' (Manusmriti 7-3/14)

भराजके हि लोकेऽस्मिन् सर्वतो विद्रुते भयात् ।

रक्षार्थमस्य लोकस्य राजानमसृजत् प्रभुः ॥

तस्यार्थे सर्वभूतानां गोप्तारं धर्मं मात्मजम् ।

ब्रह्मतेजोभयं दण्डमसृजत् पूर्वमीश्वरः ॥

The dominant thought behind the concept of kingship in Bharat was of course the defence of the realm and the rule of the law. ✓ Even such a later author like Chanakya in his reputed Sutras observes:

सुखस्य मूलं धर्मः । धर्मस्य मूलमर्थः । अर्थस्य मूलं राज्यम् ।

दण्डनीतिमधितिष्ठन्प्रजाः संरक्षति ॥

✓ 'The path to happiness is in the observance of the law which meant the performance of one's duties. Adherence to the path of duty is possible only under favourable economic conditions. If the economic conditions of men are easy and conducive, then only they can carry out their assigned duties. It is easy to understand how only under a stable and strong Government the economic condition of the society can be what is desired. Therefore the king and the institution of kingship have become the fulcrum of the stability and safety of the society as much as of its peace and prosperity. ✓ The goodness of the institution of kingship depends upon how efficiently the king administers justice and how he governs his people.'

✓ Chanakya in the fourth chapter of his *Arthashastra* has explained the concept of the 'Danda' according to Bharatiya thinkers. He says: 'Danda is the instrument by which could be accomplished the adequate maintenance of the "Adhyatma-vidya", the three Vedas, and the science of Wealth. The rules which govern the use of the "Danda" are called the "Danda-neeti". By the adherence to these precepts it becomes easy to obtain what has not been obtained, to preserve what has been acquired; to increase what has been preserved, and to use properly in a judicious and advantageous manner what has thus been collected. On this "Danda-neeti" depend the mutual relations of the people. It is therefore necessary that one who desires the good of the people should always be alert with his rod in his hand. There is no other effective weapon to prevail upon and persuade the people to abide by your wishes.' But this is not wholly correct in the opinion of Kautilya. He explains that if one were to show the rod at all times, the people will get fed up; and if one were to abandon the rod that may also bring ruin upon oneself; for this reason

it is always wise to use the rod judiciously. When the king uses the rod on the proper occasions after going through the justice of each case, then the subjects of the king reap a rich harvest of all three objectives of life, namely, merit, wealth, and satisfaction of desires. If the rod of punishment is misused by indiscretion, ignorance, and under the pressure of passions and excitements then surely even the recluses and the 'sanyasis' who have renounced the worldly life get provoked and disturbed, what of those who move in the mundane world? If the rod of punishment is abandoned and never used then the rule of the mighty fish devouring the smaller ones prevails, as a result of which the strong will exploit the weak. If the 'Danda' is properly used, then of course even the weak will live like the strong one. The king should protect his subjects who abide by the precepts of the four classes and castes by means of the power of his royal sceptre and all will surely stick to their respective paths.'

“आन्वीक्षिकी त्रयी वार्तानां योगक्षेमसाधनो दण्डः । तस्यनीतिर्दण्डनीतिः
अलब्धलाभार्था, रक्षधपरिरक्षिणी, रक्षितविवर्धिनी, वृद्धस्य तीर्थेषु प्रतिपादिनी च
तस्यामायत्ता लोकयात्रा । तस्माद्धोकायात्रार्थो नित्यमुद्यतदण्डः स्यात् । न हि एवंविधं
वशोपायनमस्ति भूतानां यथा दण्डः इत्याचार्याः । नेति कौटिल्यः । तीक्ष्णदण्डो हि
भूतानामुद्वेजनीयः । मृदुदण्डः परिभूयते । यथार्हदण्डः पूज्यः ।

सुविज्ञातप्रणीतो हि दण्डः प्रजा धर्मार्थकामैर्योजयति । दुःप्रणीतः कामक्रोधाभ्या-
मज्ञानाद्वानप्रस्थपरिव्राजकानपि कोपयति किं पुनर्गृहस्थान् । अप्रणीतो हि मात्सर्यन्याय-
मुद्भावयति । विनयमूलो दण्डः प्राणभृतां योगक्षेमावहः । ”

Such was the significance of the institution of kingship in Bharat. That the institution was perfectly and finely evolved could be shown in innumerable instances from the Vedic literature. In the oldest book of the Vedas, namely the Rig-Veda we get about forty names of kings. It should be noted here that in this Veda the king was described as the 'protector of the people' which throws enough light on the main function of the kingship. Further it deserves to be mentioned that like the kingship there is also a mention of the 'sovereignty of an emperor'. Abhyavartin Chayaman, the king

of the Pruthus, has been described as an 'emperor of the kings'. From this instance it becomes evident that the Vedic Aryas were aware of both the institutions of the 'Chakravarti' and the 'Samrat'. It however appears that the form of the State rule in the days of the Vedas was only one-monarchial. The republican form which came to be evolved in Bharat in later days between the periods of Mahabharat and the Chanakya's Arthashastra does not seem to be prevalent or very much systematised in the Vedic age. No other forms of State rule can be discovered in the Vedic period. In the description of the institutions of the State Governments between the territory stretching in between the delta of Ganga and Jumna from Kurukshetra to Prayag, the Aitareya Brahman states: 'In this territory the kings of the Kuru and Panchal dynasties are entrusted with the charge of kingships only after their crowning ceremony. Only one who is so crowned and anointed in the ceremony becomes eligible to rule as a king.'

“एतस्यां धुवायां मध्यमायां प्रतिष्ठायां दिशि ये के च कुरुवंशलानां राजानः स वशोशीनराणां राज्यायैव तेऽभिषिच्यन्ते । राजेत्येनानभिषिक्तानाचक्षते ।”

✓Whereas the word 'republic' cannot be traced in the Vedas, the word 'Raja' king recurs very often. It is derived from the root 'rat', which means to rule to control. The later meaning of this term 'Raja' (from which is derived Latin Regalis) as one who looks to the welfare of his subjects seems to have been a subsequent accretion as the ideas began to evolve with greater emphasis on the well-being of the subjects. But this concept has taken such incontrovertible root in the Bharatiya thought that on the whole throughout the Sanskrit and Prakrit literatures of the ancient and the mediaeval times this very meaning is commended and upheld. ✓The kings accepted this very meaning and acted accordingly. ✓Even the constitutions and the laws began to uphold this one view only. There is a fine piece in the Chandogya Upanishad in which the king Ashvapati describes his kingdom and his subjects as under: 'In my kingdom there is no thief; there is no coward, nor a miser; there is no drunkard; nor is there one who has not taken the vow of worship of the "fire"; there are no idiots in my

kingdom, nor men of loose character. Where could therefore be here women without morals?' (Chandogya 5-11)

न मे स्तेनो जनपदेन कदर्यो न मयपः ।

नानाहिताग्निर्नो विद्वान् न स्वैरी स्वैरिणी कुतः ॥

Such was the concept of the ideal of the institution of kingship, which every king took pride in realising. How unadulterated was the devotion of the Bharatiya kings towards their sacred role could be very well grasped from the remarks which have been placed in the mouth of the king Rama by the poet Bhavabhuti in his drama. 'Rama says: 'I will forsake everything, affection, compassion, happiness; why, even my beloved wife Janaki, for the sake of the welfare of my subjects. I will not mind any affliction in abandoning my wife for the good of my subjects.' (Uttara Ramcharita).

लेहं दयां च सौख्यं च यदि वा जानकीमपि ।

भाराधनाय लोकानां मुञ्चतो नास्ति मे लयः ॥

This can be also seen in the very eloquent expression of King Kharvel of Kalinga of the historical period. King Kharvel who was a Jain by faith is reported to have said that he was extremely happy at the thought that 'his subjects who were all happy in his kingdom, have given him a chance to make the term king in his case fully significant and appropriate'. In short, it will have to be admitted that this was the accepted meaning of the term king and the institution of kingship. In fact, this is the foundation of the Bharatiya concept of 'Rajya' rule of the State.

Whatever might have been the form of State administration whether it was a monarchy or a people's republic, one fact stands out that in practice the guidance and the Government was carried on by one person or by a selected few. It was the opinion of a few that was accepted by the many. How this came to be established is a natural but mute question. The Vedic literature throws light on this problem which has been considered by almost all the systems of Government and the treatises on them. According to Vedic thinkers, the institution of kingship came into vogue as an inevitable solution of the constant struggle for life of the people. The Aitreyā Brahman has a very revealing story to tell bearing on this

problem. In the ceaseless war between the gods and the demons the gods got defeated every time. They deliberated on the causes of their debacles and discovered that they had no one over-all leader or the commander to plan and execute their action. This deliberation made them choose a common leader in whose order and discipline they decided to conduct their war against the demons. After doing this they became successful. Thus was the institution of kingship come to be established and recognised as supreme. (Aitareya Brahman 1-14).

✓ From the above anecdote, some scholars jump to the conclusion that the Aryas were originally nomadic tribes and they picked up the institution of kingship from the well-civilised original Dravidian people residing in Bharat. We have already disproved this whole theory in the previous chapters dealing with the Aryas and Anaryas. ✓ This proposition of borrowing of the system of kingship by the Aryas from the alleged Dravidian races cannot stand any scrutiny. The above story only explains the fact how the institution of kingship took its birth in the past. What the legend in the Aitreya Brahman at the most proves is that the rise of kingship has to be traced in the conditions of war or the constant struggle for existence which the ancient communities had to face. It does not however give any account of many other questions such as whether the institution of kingship was responsible to the people, the relationship between the subjects and the king, the origin and source of authority whether of the people or of the king, the extent and nature of sovereignty of the king, etc. If we compare the Bharatiya concept of kingship with its Western counterpart the distinction between the two becomes at once clear. ✓ In the West the mediaeval thinkers invested divine inheritance on the king who was considered to be the representative of God. ✓ The king having received his authority to rule by a divine right was not answerable to the people and therefore was an absolute monarch in his own right. ✓ The people had no right to rebel against the king or demand his dethronement. The predominant thought behind that concept was to bestow sovereign and absolute powers on the king. The people were denied any right to challenge the act of a king.

How this struggle for sovereignty and absolute power was carried on for decades in the West and how it ended in the triumph of the people sending the king to the gallows is too well-known to need any recounting here.

✓ In Bharat, however, political thinkers never advocated or offered any absolute power and authority to the king. The institution of kingship in its pristine form was always regarded as subservient to the will and dependent upon the sanction of the people and as such was always answerable to them. ✓ The Bharatiya social and political thought-givers always propounded a sacred and inviolable pact or understanding between the institution of kingship and the subjects which was equally binding on both. It is a historical fact that only in Bharat, the institution of kingship, was first made responsible to the people, who had created it as an instrument for good Government. The European society could not understand this principle right up to the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The Bharatiya philosophers had evolved this sanguine concept much before even the birth of the Greek nation. The king being fully aware that all his authority and power were derived from his subjects, and therefore he tried to look to their welfare, and identified his lot with the good or bad of his people. Arya Chanakya observes in this regard: my 10 'The king must look for his personal happiness in the happiness of his people: their welfare tended to his good; there was nothing personal and exclusive to the king; his identification with his subjects must be so complete that their good and bad must be considered by him as his personal good or bad; only a king who is modest with learning, who is ever dedicated to the procurement of the pleasures and satisfaction of his subjects, deserves to enjoy the lordship of the earth. ✓ Such was the concept of the Bharatiya law-givers like Manu and Chanakya.

प्रजासुखे सुखं राज्ञः प्रजानां च हिते हितम् ✓

विद्याविनीतो राजा हि प्रजानां विनये रतः ।

अनन्यां पृथिवीं भुङ्क्ते सर्वभूतहिते रतः ॥

Someone may ask, if what Manu and Chanakya say, which may be true, could also be traced in or substantiated from the

Vedic literature? There is no doubt that the Vedic literature also reflects the same thoughts or rather anticipates what the later, law-givers elaborated in a finer and more detailed theories.

In the tenth Mandal of the Rig-Veda there is a passage, in which a king is addressed. The bard says:

“ विशस्त्वा सर्वा वाञ्छन्तु ”

‘May the subjects for ever wish you to be the ruler. The meaning is clear. In the Shatpath Brahman there is actually a mention of the name of a king who was deposed on account of his violation of the tacit understanding between him and his people. In the Aitareya Brahman a king declares:

“ यां च रात्रीमजायेहं यां च प्रेतास्मि तदुभयमन्तरेणैष्टापूर्तं मे लोकं सुकृतमायुः
प्रजां वृंजीथा यदि ते द्रुह्येयमिति ”

‘If I have at any time betrayed my duties towards my subjects, then let all the merit that has accumulated to my credit by my performing the prescribed rites and other good deeds, since the night of my birth to the day of my death, as well as the good results and fruits, which these actions should bear my whole life, progeny and everything else belonging to me, be destroyed at once.’ This pious wish and care of the kings in those days indicate in what absolute devotion they took to their duties. It should be noted here that the concept of the right of kings being derived and dependent upon the will of their subjects which came to be evolved in this country since the days of the Vedas, was in substance a bit different in nature from the Western thought and theories evolved by Locke, Rousseau and other political philosophers before and after the French Revolution.

- ✓ According to the Bharatiya thought the sovereignty rests with the Almighty through his representative the Brahman class.
- ✓ The tacit understanding or agreement is between the king and the Brahman class who represents the Sovereign power that governs the universe. Manu observes in the first chapter of his law-book: ‘This whole universe in fact belongs to the Brahmins.’ (Manu 1-100). We have already explained how the Brahman class was denied the enjoyment of the power

and prosperity which fell at his feet. Thus the device is a wonderfully effective one in as much as the sovereignty was assigned to a class which was prohibited from exploiting the power and the glory which attended the over-lordship of the kingdom. Thus was any misuse of the high calling averted by the Bharatiya thinkers in making the institution of kingship subservient to the Brahman class. It should be remembered that the Brahmans anticipated in this concept were not merely those born in the class but those who had by their virtues and merits attained the real Brahmanhood.

असि धर्मस्य गोप्तारं ददौ सत्कृत्य विष्णवे ।

विष्णुर्मरीचयेप्रादात् मरीचीर्मगवानपि ॥ ६६ ॥

महर्षिभ्यो ददौ खड्गमृषयो वासवाय च ।

महेन्द्रो लोकपालेभ्यो लोकपालास्तु पुत्रक ॥ ६७ ॥

मनवे सूर्यपुत्राय ददुःखङ्गं सुविस्तरम् ।

ऊचुश्चैनं तथा वाक्यं मानुषाणां त्वमीश्वरः ॥ ६८ ॥

असिना धर्मगर्भेण पालयस्व प्रजा इति ॥ ६९ ॥

✓ Having created the Kshatriya class the Brahman class entrusted the defence of the society and the nation to their care. ✓ The Mahabharat narrates how the Creator of the Universe the 'Father of the people' handed over a sword to Vishnu for the protection of the 'Dharma'. ✓ Vishnu gave it to Marichi, and from him it came to the hands of the Maharshis (the sages). ✓ The Maharshis bestowed it on Indra, who is the deity of the Kshatriya class. ✓ Mahendra passed it on the 'Lokapals'. They entrusted it to the hands of the first king of men Vaivaswat Manu, with an exhortation: 'You are the ruler of men; you will protect the people with this sword which is meant to defend the 'Dharma'. (Shantiparva 166-66, 67, 68, 69). ✓ This whole narration only suggests that the Kshatriyas got their authority to rule and keep order in the society from the sages—the wise men of the society who belonged to the Brahman class. Let it not be inferred here from the quotations taken from Mahabharat and Manu that the theory and practice are only of a later date. There are passages to prove their early existence even in the Vedic times. What Vyas and Manu did was only to

elaborate and explain in the language of the age what was laid down by Vedic sages. The "Purush Sukta" which has been discussed before is a convincing testimony to the fact that the Kshatriyas were created by the Brahman class according to the exigencies of the age. The initiation into kingship was not merely on contractual basis, for though the king was in duty bound to fulfil the expectations of his subjects, the Hindu concept of monarchy cannot be described as a purely contractual monarchy. There was something more sacred in it, namely, the sacrament. This can be unmistakably borne out from some of the clear references from the Rig-Veda and Atharva-Veda also.

Look to the following passage from the Atharva-Veda (6: 87-88):

'O King, we have placed you before the people, your subjects, with the intention that you will serve the cause of your nation. May you therefore be steady in this throne. Let not anything disturb you. Let all your subjects devoutly wish you to remain their king, and may they not deviate in their loyalty to you. May you be steady in this your throne. May you never commit any lapse as small as a hair. May you be as immovable as a rock, as firm and determined as the Lord Indra. May you be able to protect your kingdom and bear your subjects. There is no doubt that because of his having offered the prescribed oblations to the Lord Indra, this king has been fixed by him on this throne. There is the sanction of the Soma behind him as well as that of the Lord of the Brahmins. The sky studded with the galaxy of stars is steady; so is the earth as steady as the pole, with the mountains on her surface. As the whole universe is permanent and real, so may this king reign from this throne for ever. O king, look, the Lord Varuna is standing by you for your good; so also is Brihaspati. There is no doubt that Indra and Agni will sustain your rule. May you reign supreme without being deposed at any time. May you be able to crush your enemies and plunge them down. Let all the directions be pleasant to you and your kingdom. May the "samiti", the assembly, vote you for ever in the throne.'

आ त्वाहाविमन्तरभूर्ध्रुवास्तथा विचाचछत् ।
 विशस्त्वा सर्वा वाञ्छन्तु मा त्वद्राष्ट्रमधि भ्रशत् ॥ १ ॥
 इहैवैधि माप च्योष्टाः पर्वत इवा विचाचलत् ।
 इंद्र इहैव ध्रुवस्तिष्ठद्द राष्ट्रमु धारय ॥ २ ॥
 इंद्र एतमदीधरद्भुवं ध्रुवेण हविषा ।
 तस्मै सोमो अधि ब्रवदये च ब्रह्मणस्पतिः ॥ ३ ॥
 ध्रुवा यौर्ध्रुवा पृथिवी ध्रुवं विश्वमिदं जगत् ।
 ध्रुवासः पर्वता इमे ध्रुवो राजा विशामयम् ॥ ४ ॥
 ध्रुवं ते राजा बरुणो ध्रुवं देवो बृहस्पतिः ।
 ध्रुवं त इंद्रश्चाग्निश्च राष्ट्रं धारयतां ध्रुवम् ॥ ५ ॥
 ध्रुवोऽच्युतः प्रमृणीहि शत्रून्छत्रयतो धरान् पादयस्व ।
 सर्वा दिशः संमनसः सघ्नीचीर्ध्रुवाय ते समितिः कल्पतामिह ॥ ६ ॥

(Atharva-Veda 6: 87-88; 1 to 6)

There is almost an identical hymn in the tenth Mandal of the Rig-Veda with the following significant additional verse: 'Let us offer to Soma a definite portion of the oblations so that he will be pleased and will make your loyal subjects pay you always their tributes.' (R. 10: 173-6). This verse is very clear in regard to the position of the subjects in the security of the king. In the end of this verse the expression is 'only you are the recipient of the tributes of the people'. In explaining the significance of this important expression Dr. Jaiswal observes: 'The "sole-taker" signifies that the regular tax, as a royal due had already developed. No one else but the king alone was entitled to it. The king is asked to ascend to the raised seat which is significantly described as the highest point of the body of State. It shows that the idea of a State as an organism was realised as early as the Vedic kingship.'

✓ The institution which actually made a selection of the person of the king was called the 'samiti', which was almost the same as the Parliament of modern times. Besides this all-powerful body, there used to be in those days two other institutions which were called the 'Sabha' which was more or less like our 'Legislative Assembly', and the 'Vidatha'—an association for the determina-

tion of military and religious matters of the State. ✓ These three institutions together regulated and controlled the life of the Vedic people. It will be interesting to study the nature and scope of the three bodies which well reveal how the seeds of the parliamentary democracy of a little different nature than the one of modern times had already taken roots in the Bharat of Vedic times.

We have shown that the kings were elected or selected by the people. That begs the question if the people who chose their kings had the right to depose them. Do we come across any instances of such depositions of kings in the Vedic literature? We shall try to answer this and the allied questions presently.

The institution of kingship was the product of the struggle for peaceful existence in ancient times between aggressive rival communities and tribes which were ceaselessly at war against each other. The need for mobilising a defence and protection of the society called for an expert and masterly leadership. This fact could be traced first to the feud between the Devas and the Asuras. Unfortunately in this plain fact some scholars have discovered the grounds for wild theories. Dr. Jaiswal observes: 'If it has a historical reference, it would refer to the tribal stage of the Aryans in India and it would suggest that the institution of kingship was borrowed from the Dravidians.'

Because an astute and reputed Orientalist like Dr. Jaiswal has indulged in such propositions we have to refute the same lest his hypothetical opinion may pass off as a well-established theory. In this connection we refer the reader to our detailed examination of the misconceptions about the Aryas and Dravidas and the much-spread myth of the Aryas having come from somewhere outside Bharat. When the very foundation of this theory, namely, that the Aryas came to Bharat from somewhere outside has been shown to be baseless and merely a myth, the other hypothesis and imaginations that they borrowed the institution of kingship from the Dravidians falls to the ground and need no further refutation. In our opinion the words Deva and Asura in the Vedas refer to some special class of beings different from the human race and the feud between them also does bear out historical analysis or tests. The very notion of the Asuras and Dravidas is baseless and

therefore the hypothesis that the Aryas borrowed the institution of kingship from the Dravidians totters to the ground.

✓The institution of kingship in the Vedic days could be aptly described as contractual monarchy though it is something more than that, the contract being between the people represented by the spiritual leadership of the nation the Brahmanas and the person of the king. With the passage of time however the system changed its form and the institution became a hereditary one. But even after this substantial change from the right based on contract to the one on the ground of inheritance, it will be noted that the rites and prescriptions had to be observed, may be formally. Before a prince born in the dynasty inheriting the kingship could be crowned he had to go through the same ceremonies as of old days and had to take the same oaths. The pledge of the king and the oath of loyalty to the people are the relics of the old system of election of kingship and the contract between the people and the person of the king. ✓In some peculiar cases later on when there was some difficulty of inheritance the old method of election was not infrequently resorted to before a prince or a person was put on the throne. ✓It is a fact that when Megasthenes stayed in India the institution of kingship had changed into dynastic inheritance. Even under the changed condition, Megasthenes had reasons to remark: 'When a failure of heirs occurred in the royal house, the Indians elected their sovereign on the principle of merit'. It would be amusing to note here that in the folk tales of Buddhism, especially in the Jatak Stories of Buddha there are imaginary descriptions referring to the principle of elections among the beasts and birds. These imaginary descriptions are in reality reflections of the conditions which prevailed in the age in the social behaviour.

✓The principle of election presupposes the right of the electors to repudiate their choice when they so desire. ✓The electing community had all the incidental rights of deposing their king, placing some other person in his throne or re-electing the deposed king. Such rights existed in the Vedic times as could be gathered from various expressions found in the literature. Look to the following verse from the Atharva-Veda which records how an incompetent king was deposed and was again

re-elected to the throne: 'The people have re-elected you for this position. A large number of people have voted for your leadership; may you occupy this highest position in the rule of the kingdom and distribute justly the wealths with a generous and open heart.' (Atharva-Veda 3-1-2).

त्वां विशो वृणती राज्याय त्वामिमाः प्रदिशः पञ्चदेवीः ।

वर्ष्मन् राष्ट्रस्य ककुदिश्रमस्य ततो न उग्रो विभजा वसूनि ॥

There is another instance of an unfit king being removed from kingship and the people inviting him to take the position again: 'A "sheyan" bird will bring this king back from his wandering in the forest; the Ashvins will pave the way for you; all the relatives will gather round you; the opponents will call you back; and the friends will certainly choose you'. (Atharva-Veda 3-3-4).

इयेनो हव्यं नयत्वा परस्मादन्यक्षेत्रे अपरद्धं चरन्तम् ।

अश्विना पन्थां कृणुतां सुगतं इमे स जाता अभि संविशन्वम् ॥

A king who was re-elected thus after his deposition had to enter into a fresh agreement with his subjects. The Atharva-Veda says: 'May you return among the people, for there is agreement between you and your subjects now'. (Atharva-Veda 3-4-6). It is true that such occasions arose very rarely.

Generally a king who was elected ruled for his life till death if he was not found incompetent and as long as he carried out the agreement. The Atharva-Veda affirms: "May you rule till the end of the tenth decade." (Atharva-Veda 3-4-7).

इन्द्रेन्द्र मनुष्याः परेहि संवत्सास्था वरुणैः संयिदानः ।

स त्वा या भव्हत् स्वे स्वधस्ये स देवान् यथात स उ कल्पयाद्विशः ॥

The consecration ceremony of kingship was considered to be a sacrament. The ceremony has been described in detail in the Brahman literature. In the descriptions we find great resemblance with the modern democratic ideas and practices, may be in very crude form. It is no surprise that there should be similarity between the crowning ceremonies of kings in the Brahman period and of those in so late an age as the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In our opinion, there is no very great

difference between the period of the Vedas and those of the Brahmans. Yet we shall first refer to the ceremonies as described in the Vedas proper.

✓ The ceremony of consecrating a king was performed in great eclat in the presence of the State officers, and the ministers of the king. When the king was seated on the throne he was offered a 'mani', a stick made of the 'palash' tree (*Butea Frondosa*—lac tree) as the symbol of his office. ✓ The officers of the State who were called the 'Rajya-kartas', that is administrators of the realm, were the highest officers like the Treasurer, the Commander, the Heads of villages and towns, etc. ✓ It was out of these administrators that someone was selected to be made the king. Right upto the days of the Ramayan, these officers of the realm are referred to as administrators. This description of the persons as the Administrators of the realm was indeed significant. ✓ The 'mani' which was offered to the king was the symbol of the representation of the subjects. ✓ The mantras ^{which} the king had to recite on the occasion of the acceptance of the 'mani' were very meaningful. ✓ They were:

✓ 'O skilful artisans, chariot-builders, metal-smiths, architects, and intelligent citizens, may you support me by giving this mani to me. O kings and administrators, O bards and village-heads, I solicit your assistance. O Parna (leaf), may you secure for me the co-operation of all those who are at present here on this occasion.' (Atharva-Veda 3-5-6-7).

ये धीवानो रथकाराः कर्मांरा ये मनीषिणः ।

उपस्तीन् पर्णं मह्यं त्वं सर्वान् कृष्वभितो जनान् ॥

य राजानो राजकृतः सूता ग्रामभ्यश्च ये ।

उपस्तीन् पर्णं मह्यं त्वं सर्वान् कृष्वभितो जनान् ॥

✓ It is just reasonable that the king should invoke the support and co-operation of the representatives of the people as all could not be expected to be present on the occasion of the crowning ceremony.

✓ The throne of the king was decorated with the skins of lions, tigers and leopards, as that was symbolic of the supremacy and strength of the king over the whole kingdom. The throne was

made of jewels and costly stones studded in gold plates. It was essential to adorn even such a jewelled golden throne with the hides of lions and tigers as the symbols of strength and supremacy. All round there used to be pillars which along with the sides of the throne bore various signs and symbols which indicated the powers and functions of the kings.

While the king took his seat on the consecrated throne, a mantra was recited by the Purohit. The mantra was to the following effect: 'You are a tiger, among men. O king, you who are now ascending the throne; may you conquer all the three directions with your might and rule over the country giving all pleasures and happiness to your subjects.' (Atharva-Veda 4-8-4).

व्याघ्रो अधिवैयाघ्रे विक्रमस्व दिशो महीः ।

विशस्त्वा सर्वा वाञ्छन्तु ॥

After he took his seat on the throne, another mantra was recited while consecrating the king with the sacred waters. The mantra was: 'Here I consecrate you on all sides with these sacred waters; may you secure success by the merit of this sacred consecration.' (Atharva-Veda 4-8-5-6).

तासां त्वा सर्वासामपामभिषिञ्चामि वर्चसा ।

अभि त्वावर्चसा सिद्धन्ननापो दिव्याः पयस्वतीः ॥

Then the king was instructed in the duties which he had to perform. It was as if an instrument of instructions read out to the king. The mantra read: 'May you be able to accomplish the object of your undertaking, namely, to enhance the wealth of your kingdom, to increase the productive capacity of your people, and then to distribute equitably the wealth amongst your subjects and thus to make their life rich and easy.' (Atharva-Veda 3-4-6).

“अथा मनो वशु देयाय कृणुष्व ततो न उग्रो विभजः वसूनि ॥”

If we analyse this clear instruction to the king, we shall be able to see how almost identical it is with our modern ideas and aims of a good government. This was the common idea of a benevolent rule as can be gathered from numerous excerpts that can be cited from the Vedic literature. The

Atharva-Veda gives a fascinating description of the kingdom of Parikshit, the king of Kurus in the following terms:

राज्ञो विश्वजनीनस्य यो देवो मर्त्यं भति ।
 वैश्वानरस्य सुष्ठुतिमां शृणोता परीक्षितः ॥
 कतरत् त आहाराणि दधिमन्थं परिश्रुतम् ।
 जायापतिं विष्टृच्छति राष्ट्रे राज्ञः परीक्षितः ॥
 अभीव स्वः प्रजिहीते यवः पक्कः परो विलम् ।
 जनः सभद्रमेघते राष्ट्रे राज्ञः परीक्षितः ॥

'May you listen to the description of the kingdom of the sovereign king Parikshiti who was the protector of the universe. In the country of Parikshiti, when a husband returned home thirsty after strainful work or journey, the wife asked him what she should offer him, whether milk, curds, butter-milk, butter or any other drink which he liked.' This casual note gives us an idea how rich that kingdom was!

It is not very difficult to have a broad outline of the system of rule of a kingdom in the Vedic times, even from the Vedic literature. The task is of course easier to collect the information from the Brahmana literature.

✓In the days of Brahmanas the crowning ceremony came to be more intermixed with sacrificial rites and functions. It was a common practice in those days that a king, an emperor and the head of the institution of the spiritual leadership when they assumed their official positions had each to perform a sacrifice before they were so recognised. ✓The sacrifice which a king had to perform while ascending a throne was known as the 'Rajasuya'. ✓In the Mahabharat Yudhisthir had performed the 'Rajasuya' which had almost assumed as if it were the status of a sacrifice qualifying a king for the role of a sovereign. ✓But according to the Brahman prescriptions, this was an indispensable sacrifice for a prince assuming kingship. The Shatpath Brahman expressly states: 'The Rajasuya is meant only for the kings. Only by performing this sacrifice one becomes a king.' (Shat. 3-1-1-12).

(राज्ञ एव राजसूयम् । राजा वै राजसूयेनेष्टु भवति)

✓When the head or Guru of an 'ashram' was appointed as

the guide and philosopher of a king, then he had to perform the 'Bajapeya' sacrifice. This sacrifice is meant for the collective bliss of the society and not for any individual merit. It was also not for some other-worldly object but purely for the accomplishment of the cherished desires of the society forthwith in this life. To say more explicitly, the object of performing this sacrifice is to invoke the favours of Gods for making the kingdom rich in food and means of livelihood for the people in the nation. The leader of the Brahman class which always looked to the welfare of the society was represented by the person of a Purohit who acted as the friend, philosopher and guide of the king. It was therefore the task of this Purohit to care for the well-being of the kingdom whose moral guide he was. It was from this point of view quite appropriate that a person who was called upon to perform the function of the friend, philosopher, and guide of the realm should assume his office with such a benevolent sacrifice. It is in this way that the Purohit was connected with the 'Bajapeya' sacrifice.

The third sacrifice known as the 'Sarva-medha' was to be performed by a king after his conquest of all the kingdoms before being recognised as a sovereign ruler, or an emperor. From the three sacrifices and the thoughts which prompted them it looks, as if, at that remote time there was the idea and ambition of uniting the whole of Bharat under one sovereign rule of an emperor.

Now coming to the 'Rajasuya' sacrifice proper, we find three chief rites constituting it. The first was the ritual of sacrificial fire and offering of oblations; the second was the consecration with sacred waters; and the third was the oath-taking with the assuming of the kingship. The assumption of the office by the king was given a public recognition and sanction by the team of the eleven of the administrators mentioned already. The first and the foremost of these administrators was the Purohit, the rest ten being: the Commander, the Queen, the 'Suta', the 'Gramani', the 'Chhatra', the 'Sangrihitri', the 'Bhagduha', the 'Akshawap', the 'Govikartrin', and the 'Palgal' or the 'Taksha'. We shall now describe each one to give an idea of their functions or places in the administration.

X 1. *The Purohit*: The Purohit was required to be a master of all the learnings, especially the 'Atharva-Vidya' and the 'Dandaniti' which may be termed as 'administration by justice' or the political science. ✱ Kautilya lays down in his memorable treatise:

“पुरोहितं उदितोदितकुलशीलं षडङ्गे वेदे दैवे निमित्ते दंडनीत्यां च अभिविनीते
आपदां दैवं मानुषीणां अथर्वेभिः उपायैः च प्रतिकर्तारं कुर्वीत तमाचार्यं शिष्यः पितरं पुत्रो
भृत्यः स्वामिनमिव चातुर्वर्तेत”

✓ “The king should select a Purohit who comes from a good family; the Purohit must be well-versed in the Vedas with all its six auxiliaries, expert in the performance of all the regular and occasional rituals and functions, an authority in political science and practice, a master who could resolve and resist all the natural and man-made difficulties by the use of the “mantras” prescribed by the Atharva-Veda as well as by practical wisdom and tactics. The king should respect the Purohit as a pupil does his teacher, or a son regards his father, or even as a servant obeys his master. The king shall honour his Purohit always and abide by his directions and advice’.

It will be noted from the above directions that the word Purohit was not understood in the political science or practice in that ridiculous sense in which it is interpreted now-a-days. Purohit in those days meant the real political leader who gave all guidance and advice in State affairs or in national difficulties and dangers. The ninth and eleventh chapters of the Atharva-Veda indicate the importance of this post and the person who held it in those early days. The Purohitis rightly claimed then:!

“वयं राष्ट्रे जागृयाम पुरोहिताः ।”

‘We Purohitis, literally meaning those who are placed in the front, are always awake and alert for the nation.’ The Purohitis carried the anxieties of the welfare of their kingdoms in their heads and attended to the cares of the progress of the nation. It was their look-out and care to see that their king who had taken the vow to defend his people and the country was always alert and strong and efficient in his functions. The

Purohit was always in a position to assert as one says in the Shukla Yajurveda:

“संक्षितं मे ब्रह्म संक्षितं वीर्यं बलम् । संक्षितं क्षत्रं जिष्णुं यस्याहमस्मि
पुरोहितः ॥

‘I have maintained my Brahmanical spirit, lustrous and sacred by scrupulous adherence to my duties and obligations; I have kept physical strength and the capacities of my organs intact, powerful and efficacious; I have also helped to enhance the war-spirit and the strength of the king whose Purohit I am.’ (S. Yajurveda 11-81). In the next verse the Purohit declares: ‘I have always maintained such a condition in my nation that the arms of those on whom there is the burden of defending it shall for ever be raised and ready to strike; I have given a fillip to the ambitions of the subjects of my nation and brought a cheer on their cheeks. I have brightened the spirit of the warriors and enhanced their physical strength. I will defeat and exhaust the enemies of my nation with my sharp and effective diplomacy and shall carry my countrymen to the heights of glory and prosperity.’ (S. Yajurveda 11-82).

उदेपाम् बाहू अतिरमुद् वर्चो अथो बलम् ।

क्षिणोमि ब्रह्मणाऽमित्रानुन्नयामि स्वामहम् ॥

This is an eloquent testimony of what the Purohit was expected to be in ancient days. The Vedic thinkers had recognised this significant function of the person of a Purohit. Brihaspati was the Purohit of the Gods. If we cast a glance at the praises of the Divine Purohit, we shall get an idea how high he was regarded in the Vedic society. In the Rig-Veda it is said: ‘One who pleases the great grand Brihaspati with devotion, with the offer of praises and a complete surrender at his feet, he only becomes a king, and succeeds in overcoming his adversaries with his frightful prowess. The king in whose palace a Purohit who is saintly and learned gets an honourable place, he alone succeeds in living in honour, happiness and contentment; for him the mother earth produces all sorts of corns; before such a king all the subjects bend down and obey his directions; the might of such a king turns out to be irresistible and he conquers his enemies and captures their wealths;

such a king also manages to keep his own relatives and people on his side at his absolute disposal; he becomes the recipient of the blessings of gods.' (Rig-Veda 1-50-7-8-9).

“ सः इत् राजा प्रतिऽजन्त्यानि विश्वा शुष्मेण तस्थौ अभि वीर्येण ।

वृहस्पतिम् यः सुऽभृतम् विभर्ति बभ्रुऽयति वन्दते पूर्वऽभाजम् ॥ ७ ॥

सः इत् क्षेति सुंऽधितः ओकसि स्वे तस्मै इळा पिन्वते विश्वऽदानीम् ।

तस्मै विश्वाः स्वयम् एव नमन्ते यस्मिन् ब्रह्मा राजनि पूर्वः एति ॥ ८ ॥

अप्रतिऽइतः जयति सम् धनानि प्रतिऽजन्त्यानि उत या सऽजन्त्या ।

अवस्यवे यः वरिष । कृणोति ब्रह्मणे राजा तमवन्ति देवाः ॥ ९ ॥ ”

The whole of the Rig-Vedic period reflects and resounds with the prowess and accomplishments of the Purohīts like ‘Shrit-bandu’, ‘Kavash’, ‘Priyamedha’, ‘Bharadwaj’, ‘Wamdeo’, ‘Kakshivan’ and others. Of all these royal Purohīts ‘Vasishtha’ stands supreme whose eminence and prowess was the most astounding.

The king Trutsu of the Bharatiya people had been defeated by his enemies. He was reduced to a miserable and helpless condition. His treasures had become empty and his subjects were suffering extreme hardships. When reduced to such a plight the Grand Purohit Vasishtha offered him his hand of help and co-operation and resurrected his fallen kingdom.

The most miraculous of the achievements of Vasishtha was his role in the War of the Ten Kings. The war seems to have been fought in the remote age in the region of the Five rivers known as the Punjab of the modern times. The king Sudas performed an ‘Ashvamedha’ sacrifice at the instance and under the auspices of his then Purohit Vishvamitra. He had conquered a horde of enemies, who were smarting at their defeat. All these vanquished kings conspired against king Sudas. This grand conspiracy included such mighty and powerful princes like ‘Kavi Chayman’, ‘Turvashu’, ‘Puru’, ‘Vaikarna’ and others. Sudas was overcome with anxiety at the thought of this powerful united front of these formidable enemies. He apprehended almost his total ruin. He recollected how the great Purohit Vasishtha had redeemed the lost kingdom of Trutsu. He began to think that only Vasishtha could save him from the impending catastrophe. With this forethought he approached Vasishtha

and offered him his post of Purohit. It was then that the wise Vasishtha gave a single-headed fight against the joint arms and intelligence of the Ten Kings and brought over their total debacle. This War of the Ten Kings has been considered to be one of the most significant landmarks in history and its descriptions as the finest pieces in the Vedic literature. The Rig-Veda states:

“ एवेव कं दाशराज्ञे सुदासं प्राबदिन्द्रो ब्रह्मणा वो वसिष्ठाः ”

‘O Vasishtha, thus did Lord Indra protect the king Sudas, that was indeed the result of your device and the power of your mantras.’ The War between the king Sudas and his ten adversaries was indeed a miracle of Vasishtha, if we take into consideration the strengths of the armies on both sides. The achievement has been aptly described in the Rig-Veda as:

“ सिम्हं चित्पेत्वेना जवान ”

‘A she-goat overpowering a lion.’ It will now be realised why a machiavellian author like Kautilya should lay so great a stress on the importance of the Purohit of a king.

2. *Senani or the Senapati*: The Commander-in-Chief of the Army is the second jewel—‘ratni’ in the cabinet of a king’s administrators. Kautilya describes the Commander as ‘well-versed and seasoned in the art and science of war and in the use of war weapons’. The army symbolises the strength of a kingdom and is considered to be the measure of the might of a king. The Commander must therefore be wholly loyal and devoted to the king. The Commander is in essence as inseparable a part of the institution of State-rule as life is in body.

3. *The Queen*: The queen occupied an important position in the institution of administrators. She has to be consulted like the Purohit and the Senapati before assumptions of offices in her right as a Queen of the realm. When specially it is remembered that the kings used to have a number of wives, the significance of recognising one as the Queen of the realm will be well understood. The institution of kingship remained incomplete without the person of the Queen, as the sacrifice of ‘Rajasuya’ on the occasion of the assumption of the

kingship could not be performed without her. The wife of the king had also to be consecrated as the Queen along with her husband with certain definite rites.

4. *Suta* : It is a common notion that 'Suta' is a court-bard who always sang the eulogies of the king. But the real meaning of the term is quite different from the common notion. ✓ Suta meant in those days an officer who maintained the records of all events good and bad taking place in the kingdom. Kautilya recognises him as an important officer of the administration. The famous Chinese traveller Yuan-Chwang who visited Bharat in the days of Harshavardhan has noted that he met officers in almost every province of the State who kept regular records of the happenings of all kinds in the kingdom. The highest officer whom we might call as the head of the archives of the nation was called the Suta.

✓ 5. *Chhatri* : He was the officer who looked after the royal umbrella, and may be, other regal insignia like the sceptre, etc.

✓ 6. *Gramani* : The Head of the villages and towns was called the Gramani.

✓ 7. *Samgrahitri* : Means the 'Treasurer of the Realm'. This officer has also been termed as the 'Sannidhatri', the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

✓ 8. '*Bhagdugh*' : The 'Chief of the Revenue Department', who looked to the collections of revenues of the realm. In Arthashastra this officer was called the 'Samahartrin'.

9. *Akshawap* : This is explained by commentators as the officer who looked after the gambling houses. It is a fact that there were gambling houses in those days and regular officers were appointed to look after them. But it is absurd to suppose that such a petty officer could be included amongst the chief administrators of the kingdom. The commentators have been misled by the word 'Aksha' which ordinarily means the dice with which the gamblers play. But there is another sense in which the word is used namely the symbol to measure and count the numbers. It is this meaning which is applicable here. ✓ Kautilya refers to departmental stores by the word 'Akshashala', where articles like gold, silver and such other valuable materials were counted or measured and taken into custody. The term used in the Arthashastra is the 'Akshapatal'

which is identical with the Vedic term 'Akshawap'. He may be called as the 'Custodian of the Realm'.

10. *Govikartrin*: He is the Head of the Forest Department. Preservation of the game or their destruction was under the care of this officer. Megasthenes has mentioned this as one amongst the many important officers of a kingdom.

11. *Palgal*: He represented the common working people, and was personally the Head of the message-carriers. He has been described as wearing a red turban.

These officers of the kingdom used to preside at the ceremony of the coronation of a king. With the sanction of all these the king used to solicit the approval of the guardians of the universe. Oblations were offered in the names of different deities, chief of them being the Varuna, who is considered to be the deity of Vedic laws. Before the actual 'abhisheka,' anointing ceremony, consecration prayers were offered to the main deities soliciting certain blessings for life's vitality from the Sun, virtues of a good family from the sacred house-hold Fire, strength for the protection of the immovable properties from the Soma, wisdom and intelligence from Brihaspati, the power to rule from the Lord Indra, ability to defend the Law from the Deity Rudra, and devotion to truth from Mitra. The Shatpath Brahman explains these symbolic prayers to suggest that the deities represent here the different sections of the society Agni for Brahman, Indra for the Kshatriyas, and the Lord Pushan for the rest of the common folk, permitted by all of whom the king considered himself to be eligible for the coronation. After all these preliminaries, the king was given a bath with the water sprinkled out of a golden pot with hundred holes. It was the belief that the sacred waters give a king the right to rule over the land while the gods confer only the virtues and qualities to do so. The sacred water was identified with the land. The Shatpath Brahman has actually a prayer in praise of the coronation where the sage addresses it to 'bestow the kingdom on the person who is to be crowned'. The king then dressed himself in silken garments and stepped on the tiger-skin. Then the crown was put on his head when the Purohit announced the assumption of kingship by him. The declaration used to be: 'Know you all this

to have become the king of the whole nation. The Fire, presiding over the House knows this; Indra whose fame spreads for ever also knows this; Mitra and Varuna who are always wedded to the task of enforcing the observance of the laws are also aware of this; the omniscient Pushan is of course aware of this; and the sky and earth which exist to make all the universe happy, know it too. What of these, the benevolent Mother of Gods, Aditi, also accepts this.'

“आविमयीऽआवितोऽअमिगृहपतिरावितऽइन्द्रो वृद्धभवाऽआवितौ मित्रावरुणौ धृतव्रतावावित्तः पूषा विश्ववेदाऽआविते द्यावापृथिवी विश्वशम्भुवा वावित्तादितिरुक्षर्मा ।”

✓After this declaration by the Purohit, the king took the pledge before the assembly of the subjects gathered around him for the occasion. The oath or the pledge had to be sworn to every member who was bound to serve the nation right from the sovereign ruler to a petty chief and head of a department, without which no coronation ceremony was recognised to be complete, nor was a person acknowledged as a king even if he occupied the throne. The Aitareya Brahman remarks: 'The Kshatriya who aspires to be victorious everywhere, to acquire the highest place of honour among the galaxy of kings, to become eligible for higher and higher positions and powers of Sovereignty, "Bhaujya", "Swarajya", "Vairajya", etc., or in fact one who cherishes the ambition to become the undisputed solitary over-ruler of the whole world bounded by the seas, desiring that his empire should survive to the end of life in the universe, such an aspirant should be made to take the following oath.' The king must chant the oath with full faith in it. The oath was: 'I will try to carry out all the obligations and functions for the preservation and protection of my subjects. If I fail in my duties towards my subjects, and thus if I commit treason to my people, then all the merit which I might have acquired since the night of my birth till the day of my death by performing regular and occasional good deeds may all these merits at one stroke be denied to me; let my children and progeny be destroyed, and let my whole life be ruined.'

“स य इच्छेदेववित्क्षत्रियमयं सर्वा जितीर्जयेतायं सर्वाक्रोधान्निन्देतायं सर्वेषां राज्ञा

श्रेष्ठ्यमातिष्ठं परमतां गच्छेत साम्राज्यं भौज्यं स्वाराज्यं देराज्यं पारमेष्ठ्यं राज्यं महाराज्यमाधिपत्यमयं समन्तपर्यायी स्यात्सर्वभौमः सार्वयुष आऽन्तादापरार्धात्पृथिव्यै समुद्रपर्यन्ताया एकराडिति तमेतेनैन्द्रेण महाभिषेकेन क्षत्रियं ज्ञापयित्वाऽभिषिचेत् ॥ स ब्रूयात् सह श्रद्धया याञ्च रात्रीमजायेहं याञ्च प्रेतास्मि तदुभयमन्तरेणैष्टापूर्तं मे लोकं सुकृतमायुः प्रजां वृञ्जीथा यदि ते द्रुह्येयमिति ॥ ”

While the Purohit was consecrating the king with the coronation water, he makes a very significant declaration to the following effect:

‘O King, here I consecrate you with the glory of the Moon, may you become the overlord of the Kshatriyas. You will be able to protect yourself against the arrows hurled at you by the enemies. Here I anoint you with the lustre of the Fire, with the brilliance of the Sun, and the strength of Lord Indra. O ye gods, may you inspire this king to acquire the commendable epithet of a ‘Kshatra’, overall greatness acknowledged by all, and extensive kingdom. O you common people of all classes, this is your king, but as far as we the ascetic Brahmins are concerned, we have only one King the Lord of the Constellation—the Moon.’ (Aitareya Brahman 17-18).

“सोमस्य त्वा बुध्रेनाभिषिञ्चाम्यग्नेर्ब्राजसा सूर्यस्य दक्षसेन्द्रस्येन्द्रियेण । क्षत्राणां क्षत्रपतिरेष्यति दिधून् पाहि ॥ १७ ॥ इमं देवाऽअसपत्नं सुबध्वं महते क्षत्राय महते जानराज्यायेन्द्रस्येन्द्रियाय । इमममुष्य पुत्रममुष्यं पुत्रमस्यै विशाऽएषवोऽमा राज्ञा सोमोऽस्माकं ब्राह्मणानां राजा ॥ ”

In the finis of the coronation ceremony the king sang his prayers in the praise of the Mother Earth. The prayer appears in the Shatpath Brahman and is to the following effect:

‘O Mother Earth, you are my Mother, may you never hurt me; I will never injure you; the Mother never harms her own son; nor even a son afflicts his Mother.’

“पृथ्वीमातर्मा हिंसीः मा अहं त्वां । न हि माता पुत्रं हिनस्ति न पुत्रो मातरम् ॥ ”

The coronation concludes with a dramatic rite which is staged to warn and impress upon the king and all those who are assembled there that even the royal person is not beyond the jurisdiction of the rod of justice and law and is subject to punishment when he commits a violation of the law of the land.

The Shatpath Brahman narrates the following ritual: 'The Purohit then takes his sacred stick and strikes on the back of the king. This striking on the back of the king was always silent and was enacted to show to all that even the king was punishable by the rod of Justice and Law if he committed a violation of the same.' (Shatpath 5-4-4-4).

मथैनं पृष्ठतस्तूष्णीमेव दण्डैर्ध्नन्ति । त दण्डैर्ध्नन्तो दण्डवधमतिनयन्ति तस्माद्वाज
दण्ड्यो यदेनं दण्डवधमतिनयन्ति ॥

We have already shown at length that the office of the kingship in early ages was not hereditary and that there were kings who were deposed. A king so deposed had to perform a sacrifice named 'Sautramani'.

The Aitareya Brahman tells a king to recite a mantra if he desired to have the kingship for one, two or three generations.

भूरिति च इच्छेदिममेव प्रत्यन्नमद्यादित्यथ च इच्छेद् द्विपुरुषं भूर्भुवः इत्यथ च
इच्छेत्रि पुरुषं वाऽप्रतिमं वा भूर्भुवः स्वरिति ॥

The inference that can be legitimately drawn from this recommendation is that some kings were on the thrones only for their lifetime, some for two generations and some others for three.

On a closer study of the Vedic institution of kingship we shall discover many more revealing facts. We however only recapitulate the findings here.

The Vedic seers were fully conscious of the fact that the institution of kingship was only man-made; that the institution depend upon the choice of the people who selected their kings; that the Hindu institution of monarchy at all times was answerable to the spiritual leadership of the society as well as to the common masses in it; that the office of kingship was conditional and was determined by the agreement between the king, the spiritual leadership and the common people; and that the kingship was recognised only on the performance of the sacrament. In short the institution of kingship was in one sense a joint and co-operative responsibility and was assigned an important function in the life of a State and nation. The kingship was tantamount to a trust vested with interests and

cares of the defence of the land, safeguarding the subjects from exploitation, as well as of maintaining a happy and harmonious concord between the different layers of the society the four classes. The institution of monarchy was never beyond the pale of law and was always considered to be punishable for every violation of the tacit agreement between the king and his subjects. It was the kingship or the monarchy which exercised sovereign power, which *de jure* resided only in the 'Samiti' now called the Parliament. We shall now have a look at the Parliament or the Samiti as it existed in the Vedic age.

CHAPTER XXII

THE VEDIC SAMITI AND SABHA

✓ THE Samiti in which all the sovereign authority had been vested is mentioned in the early books of the Vedas. The root meaning of the word is 'to come together' which is identical in the word 'Committee'. In the modern political sense it was a representative body of the people. ✓The Samiti exercised among others the function of selecting the King or of deposing him. The Atharva-Veda expressly says: 'May the

धुवाय ते समितिः कल्पतामिह ।

Samiti keep you the king permanently.' (Atharva-Veda 6-88-3). There is only one expression to the effect: 'The Samiti does

नास्मै समितिः कल्पते ॥

not appoint him as a king.'

✓The king had always to be present in the deliberations of the Samiti. ✓The Rig-Veda states: 'A king wedded to truth enters the Samiti every day.' (Rig-Veda 9-12-6).

राजान सत्यः समितो रियानः ।

There is a fine cross reference of this common practice of kings attending the 'Samiti', namely: 'Just as the kings are present in the Samitis, knowledge of herbs must be in a physician.'

यत्रौषधीः समरमत राजानः समिताविब ॥

So according to the Vedic political thinkers the presence of the kings in the assemblies was as indispensable as the knowledge of the herbs in a physician. The plain conclusion is that the kings were intimately associated with the deliberations in the Samiti. ✓In their absence a President used to conduct the proceedings. As a conclusion from all references, it can be said that the assemblies were very closely associated with the affairs of the State since the days of the Rig-Veda right up

to the time of the Chhandogya Upanishad. There are grounds to infer that even in the pre-Vedic times there must have been such assemblies, as some mentions indicate, that even the Vedic people considered them to be of remote origin and existence. ✓ A close study and arrangement of the proceedings of these assemblies give us a clear idea of their functions. ✓ From some of the hymns, there appears to be no doubt that the assemblies used to discuss very important topics of political and social significance. Look for instance to the hymn on the importance of co-operation, consultations and unanimous decisions in Samitis. The hymn says:

'Friends, you shall assemble together and then work together; you will think together till all your minds agree. Like the gods who shared their oblations together in a sacrifice, you should think and work together. Let your policy and decisions be unanimous; may your assembly be of one mind, so that your thinking and your decisions will be identical and unanimous. I tell you now one secret to achieve this unity and unanimity; I offer this oblation to the Fire one and common for and on behalf of all of you. That secret is that your thought and aspirations should be identical; may your hearts be infused with an identical sentiment; let your minds be intent upon one common objective. That is indeed the secret of achieving the common goal.' (Rig-Veda 10-191).

“संगच्छ्वं संवो मानांसि जानताम् । देवाः भागं यथा पूर्वं संजानाना उपासते
॥ २ ॥ समानं मंत्रः समितिः समानी समानं मनः सहचित्तमेवाम् । समानं मंत्रं
अभिमंत्रये वः हविषा जुहोमि ॥ ३ ॥ समानीव आकूतिः समाना हृदयानि वः । समान-
मस्तु वः मनः यथा वः सुसहासति ॥ ४ ॥”

✓ Very often some social questions as well as some philosophical problems came for discussion before the Samiti. On such occasions there used to be decisive debates till a unanimous conclusion was reached. ✓ Every one tried to put his view-point and impress it on the body. The Chhandogya Upanishad mentions one such interesting event. One Brahmachari who had finished his studies in his preceptor's ashram went to the Samiti of the Panchalas. The king Pravahanjaivali was himself present in the assembly. He participated in the debate. :

✓The assembly seems to have had economic questions also before it for discussion. ✓The word 'Samaykama' means a unanimous decision of the assembly in regard to the economic policy. 'Unanimity between those interested or friends regarding economic questions ' is called 'samaya'.

✓The Samiti had a complementary body which was called a 'Sabha'. ✓It was in fact in our current terminology more or less the national judicature. ✓Both of these the Samiti and the Sabha seem to be very ancient in age even in the opinion of the Vedic writers. ✓The Atharva-Veda mentions: 'The Sabha and the Samiti are the two daughters of the Prajapati.' (The very expression daughters of the Prajapati, indicates how age-old these institutions must have been with the ancient Bharatiyas). ✓The mantra further prays: 'these two daughters should strengthen my case and defend me. Whoever I associate, may he always co-operate with me. O, ye elders, may you speak sweet and agreeable to those who assemble with you in the assembly. (Atharva-Veda 7-13).

सभा च मा समितिश्चावतां प्रजापतेर्दुहितरौ संविदाने ।

येना संगच्छा उप मा स शिक्षा चारु वदानि पितरः संगतेषु ॥

✓This is a very convincing piece to show how much even in those ancient days the Bharatiyas had understood, and adopted a code of conduct which was not only democratic but also skilful in achieving the successful participation and amicable co-operation of all the elements in the society. ✓That is indeed the secret of success of a democracy and the Bharatiyas had imbibed the spirit at a very early date as it appears from the above prayers. ✓Where all matters were decided by the debates and discussions in the assemblies, it is hardly imaginable that there could always be unanimity of opinions in regard to every subject under the Sun. ✓Differences were bound to be there in which circumstance the only safe course was to depend upon the majority view. This was also recognised in the Vedic times. It is for this very reason that the 'Samiti' was generally called as 'Narishtha' in the Vedic literature, which word was interpreted by the commentators as: 'Narishtha is a body whose decisions are inviolable or irrepudiable. ✓When a majority of assembly men give their verdict one way, it becomes

unassailable or inviolable by the rest. It is on account of

“ नरिष्ठा, अहिंसिता परैः अनभिभाष्या बहवः संभूय यदि एकं वाक्यं ब्रूयुः तर्हि न परैः तत् अतिलिङ्घ्यम् अतः अनतिलिङ्घ्यवाक्यत्वात् नरिष्ठेति नाम । ”

this its virtue of being inviolable the Sabha is called 'narishtha'. ✓ Every member of the body had the greatest regard for the decisions of the assembly. ✓ Every one tried to win over the other members to his point of view for once the decision had been given, it became a law which could not be subverted. A member of the Vedic assembly has expressed his aspirations. He says: 'O Assembly, I have full knowledge of your importance and authority and the honoured place you have in our life. You are indeed the "narishtha" and hence I crave that every one who is attending this assembly should speak what is favourable to me and what will be consistent with my arguments.' (Atharva-Veda 7-13-2).

विदमते सभे नाम नरिष्ठा नाम वा असि ।

ये ते के च सभासदः ते मे सन्तु सवाचसः ॥

✓ It becomes apparent from the above verse how members must have tried to canvass support of other members to their views very much like the practice in our Parliaments. A member required a lot of study and mastery over the subject which he advocated in the assembly. But besides the personal element as well as the gathered information, there is something else which counts very much in the ultimate result of a debate. It is the chance or the destiny. ✓ Members of the Vedic 'Samiti' knew this fact as well as their modern counterparts. Listen to what the Vedic assembly-man said: 'May I turn out to be the leading amongst the members attending this assembly in point of knowledge and effective personal influence. O Indra, may you make me destined to gather the fruit of success of this whole assembly.' (Atharva-Veda 7-12-3).

एषामहं समासीनानां वर्चो दिज्ञानमाददे ।

अस्याः सर्वस्याः संसदो मामिन्द्रभागिनं कुरु ॥

It happened as it happens in our modern assemblies, that when the debates were going on some terse or uninteresting subjects, the members became inattentive, indulged in dozing,

or their minds became diverted to some other things. On such occasions the member on legs would request the attention of the other members. There is a verse in the Atharva-Veda to this effect. It says: 'If your mind is diverted to some other subject or thought here or there, may I request you to turn it towards me; may I solicit your mind and attention to what I say.' (Atharva-Veda 7-12-4).

यद्वो मनः परागतं यद् बद्धमिह वेह वा ।

तद् व आबर्तयामसि मयि वो रमतां मनः ॥

✓The members of the 'Sabha' were called 'Pitarah', since they were generally elder and respected, learned and influential citizens. The commentator explains this word to mean 'guardians, just like parents.'

“ हे पितरः, पालकाः पितृभूताः वा सभासदो जनाः । ”

✓The Sabha used to deliberate and determine the code of conduct and discipline for the society in regard to all aspects of life. ✓It was also the function of the Sabha to inquire into the crimes and offences and to deliver adequate punishments in serious cases. There is a reference in the Chapter on 'Purush Medha' sacrifice in the Shukla Yajurveda to an offender who is brought to a 'Sabha' for the determination of the accusation against him and the dispensation of justice. The offences punishable by the Sabha enumerated in that book of the Veda are as below: 'Whatever offence in the village, in the forest, in the assembly, in regard to the physical organs, concerning the Shudra class, or the Vaishya class, or whatever sins in the performance of rituals and rites, we might have committed, you are the redeemer of the same.' (Shukla Yajur-Veda 20-17).

यद्ग्रामे यदरण्ये यत्सभायां यदिन्द्रिये । यच्छूद्रे यदर्थे यदेनक्षक्रमा वयं
नदेकस्याधि धर्माणि तस्याव यजनमसि ॥

The last appeal of an accused lay with this tribunal of the 'Sabha'. When an accused was acquitted by the Sabha, the final arbiter of fate of the man who stood before it to face justice, one can imagine the unbounded joy of the person and his relatives. There is a lively description of such a rejoicing in the Rig-Veda. The verse says:

‘All friends rejoice in the welcome of the friend who has been acquitted by the Sabha and has returned home with a fair name. Being completely discharged of all the accusations, he also turns out to become brave and strong to do glorious deeds and thus prove helpful and blissful to his friends.’

सर्वे नन्दन्ति मनसा आऽगतेन सभाऽसहेन सख्या सखायः ।

किंलिषऽस्पृत् पितुऽसनिः हि एषां अरं हितः भवति वाजिनाय ॥

(Rig-Veda 10-71-10).

In the Buddhist literature also we get descriptions of the Sabhas and the Samitis which are no doubt the legacies of the Vedic age. The famous couplet in Pali on the subject of Sabha reiterates all the points which the Vedic assembly used to be distinguished for. The verse is: ‘That is no Sabha if there are no saints in it; those who do not tell the truth (moral law), they are not saints. Only those who being themselves unmoved by anger, jealousy, and greed, speak the truth, what is moral, and good, and lawful, are indeed the saints.’ And of course a

“न सा सभा यत्थ न संति संतो न ते संतो ये न भणन्ति धम्मम् ।

रागं च दोसं च पहाय मोहे धम्मं भणन्ताव भवन्ति संतो ॥

Sabha composed of such saints only deserved the universal respect. It may be noted here that there used to be a special type of a uniform dress for the members sitting in the Sabhas and the Samitis. The Sabha had a Chairman who demanded utmost and explicit respect from every one, a member or an outsider. The famous expression in the Rudra hymn: ‘Bow to the Sabhas and the Chairmen of the Sabhas’ is very eloquent on the point.

In the Vedic age there was one other institution known as the ‘Vidatha’ like the Sabha and included in the Samiti. The function of this institution was to control and guide the military wing of the State. Some people opine that the ‘Vidatha’ itself means the military wing of the State. But from the Atharva-Veda it appears that the ‘Sabha, the Samiti and the Sena’ were the three independent wings of public administration of the State. Some others consider that the origin of all these three was the ‘Vidatha’, which in the passage of time evolved and expanded into the above three

separate institutions. There is however no decisive evidence to support these views. The 'Vidatha' is referred to in the sixth hymn of the first mandal of the Rig-Veda. There while describing the 'Agni' he is compared to the 'ketu' that is the flag of the 'Vidatha'. In the thirty-eighth hymn of the third mandal we come to know how 'the king got his directions in regard to some specific issues from the debates in the "Vidatha".'

(विद्यस्यधीभिः क्षत्रं राजानाप्रदिदो दधायै)

Thus was the public life raised to an ideal height by these Bharatiya institutions of Samiti and Sabha which were truly popular in their character and sovereign in authority.

We would like here to refer to a regrettable tendency though very minor of some hasty writers who seem to be very much influenced by the external glamour of modern materialists. These writers point to some instances from the Vedic and post-Vedic history and dare to condemn the whole Bharatiya culture as primitive and sub-human. No one of course would plead for or defend the indefensible. But the real test, if a culture and civilisation were refined or primitive, sweet or abominable is what is the general motive of the philosophy of life preached in the society. Is it to turn the human into sub-human and beastly or into the superhuman and divine? How much has that culture and civilisation accomplished it? The answers to these questions decide the nature of the culture and civilisation. One finds that despite some abominable instances of brutish kings and rulers, the whole trend of the Bharatiya ideology of the rule of a State and society was to drive out the brute from the human nature and to raise the people to a divine level. It is not that in the short history of Islam there have not been good kings and kingdoms, but they do not make the fibre and texture of the culture and civilisation spread by Islam. Instead of curbing the beast in man, Islam taught its followers to revenge upon the non-believers and quench its thirst for conquest and rapine. It is this test that decides the character of a culture and civilisation and not the stray instances of good or bad rulers. Look for instance to this direction in the Koran in regard to the captured women. Palmer quotes: 'Captived

women are to be reduced to slavery and though already married, may be taken as concubines. The faithful are forbidden to contract friendship with Jews, Christians and unbelievers.' (The Koran by G. H. Palmer; Chapter 4, page 193). This direction in the most regarded Book of that Faith had fired devilish ambitions in the hearts of fanatic followers of the faith and brought over waves of visitations of wholesale measures, vandalism, and ruin on the peoples and countries of two continents. It is for this reason that we call Islam a religion of 'Asuri' culture. The record of the rise of Christianity is not very different from that of Islam. Compared to these the Vedic ideology and idealism stand indisputably very high in regard to human culture and civilisation.

The Vedic culture always strived to banish the brute from the human behaviour. Universal man was the subject of attention before the Bharatiya thinkers and they never confined their thoughts within the barriers of race, country, and religion. The motives which inspired their laws of social conduct and State administration were also as catholic and as comprehensive to include or to apply to all human beings equally for all the times. We have dealt with the subject in great details in a previous chapter in which we have quoted the opinions of foreign travellers from Megasthenes to Marco Polo on how high and noble culture was evolved in Bharat through its social system and the State institutions.

Having described the law-making institutions of the Vedic Bharat it will now be appropriate to turn to the machinery which kept the honour and execution of the laws unsullied and inviolate. The strength of a State depends not only on wise laws but its capacity to execute them. This power or capacity in its turn depends upon the physical strength of its arms and armies. How that was successfully achieved in Bharat we shall see in the following chapters.

CHAPTER XXIII

ARMY, MISSILES AND MANTRAS OF THE VEDIC PEOPLE

THE human society being a complex structure of the good and bad, the weak and strong, the selfish and selfless, the moral and immoral as a result of which constant strife and wars were inevitable, it has been found always necessary to have a strong army for its protection. In every age, a community of men has provided some measure for the protection of the weaker elements. With the development of communities into nations, the seed to rear an army for self-defence became indispensable. Later on the civilisation of a people was nourished by and incidentally depended upon wars. A dictum came to be recognised that war and civilisation went hand-in-hand. Even a modern philosopher like Ruskin enunciated a proposition that in war nations thrived, in peace they decayed. It was no wonder that the ancient Bharatiyas had developed the arms and the art of war to perfection. It came to be recognised almost as a science. The whole of Rig-Vedic literature seems to be reverberating with the loud beatings of 'Dundubhi', the war drums. If this early Vedic age had open wars with the warnings of war-drums, the strategy changed a little with the passage of time in the later Vedic period of Atharva-Veda which describes various methods and tactics of guerilla warfare. Before we go to describe the weapons and the nature of wars, it would be interesting to present before the readers the God-of-War whom the Bharatiyas considered to be their guardian deity.

The Vedic people were devoted to and worshipped Lord Indra as their Supreme God-of-War. It was this Indra who had 'gifted the Bharatbhoomi to the Aryas'. It was he who showered the favour of blissful rains for his devotees. It was he who had paved the way for the pent-up waters to make them flow down. It was Indra at whose behest generally the

Gods and the minor god-heads conduct themselves. (Rig-Veda 4-26-2).

अहं भूमिमददामार्यायाहं वृष्टिं दाशुषे मर्याय ।

अहमपो जनयं वावशाना मम देवासो अनुकेतमायन् ॥

Indra was thus the Super-God of the Vedic people who had showered all sorts of blessings and prosperity upon his devout followers, the Bharatiya people. There is no wonder that the Bharatiyas should praise this their Supreme benefactor and offer him all the oblations in first priority.

This all-powerful God Indra did not spare himself to solve any difficulty of his followers. He would drink the goblets of Soma juice offered to him by his devotees and rush to resolve their difficulties. The exploits of Indra are so numerous and miraculous as cannot be described in a short space of pages. All these brave deeds of the supreme benefactor of Bharatiya people have been sung in two hundred whole hymns and innumerable stray verses in the Rig-Veda. Whenever the Vedic nation was in difficulty, it was Indra who was invoked and who appeared on the scene of action or the danger spot to relieve his distressed worshippers.

Indra was born of the sage Kashyap and the Mother Aditi. It is remembered that this meritorious couple begot the valiant war-god for the universal victory of the Aryas. The sage Vasishtha informs us that Kashyap wanted a son for a victory in the war, and the mother Aditi gave birth to that son who was to turn out to be the benefactor of the race. That Indra is the lord and the leader of the armies. Indra is indeed the defender of the 'cows' and verily the terror of his enemies. One who can please this, just, but hard task-master, he will never deviate from his duties, nor ever get confused. The devotee who pleases Indra with service and sacrifice, becomes endowed with prosperity. Such a devotee always adheres to the right path and is respected by the people.' (Rig-Veda 7-20-5).

वृषाज्जान वृषणम् रणायतमुचिन्नारी नर्यं ससृप ।

प्रयः सेनानीः अघनृभ्यः अस्ति इनः सत्वागोषणः सधृणुः ॥

How long this prowessful child remained in the womb of

its mother and what it did at the time of its birth and after has been described as follows:—

किं सः ऋषक् कृणवत् ये सहस्रं मासः जभार शरदः च पूर्वीः ।

नहि तु अस्य प्रतिमानं अस्ति अन्तः जातेषु उत मे जनिष्वाः ॥

‘The powerful Indra was conceived by his mother for thousands of months nay innumerable winters! What greater miracle had Indra to perform? Remember, that there will be no other like or equal to Indra amongst all those that are born or would be born in future.

(Rig-Veda 4-18-4)

‘This child Indra was so brilliant and lustrous, when it was born the Mother Aditi thought it to be something strange, and hid her wonderful child in a secret place. But (the newly) born Indra grew up there and wearing his armour rose up from that place and filled both the earth and the sky with light and lustre.’ (Rig-Veda 4-18-5).

अवधम् इव मन्यमाना गुहा अकः इन्द्रम् माता वीर्येण निरुद्धम् ।

अथ उदस्थाम् स्वयमत्कन् वसानः आरोदसी इति अपृणात् जायमानः ॥

‘The splendour of Indra was so unbearable that all the mountains and hills, the innumerable rivers and streams, the very heaven and earth, began to shake before his lustreful personality. Only the Winds started shouting his praises like man.’ (Rig-Veda 4-22-4).

विष्वा रोषांसि प्रवतः च पूर्वीः द्यौः ऋष्यात् जनिमन् वेजतक्षाः ।

आ मातरा भरति शुष्मी आ गोः नृवत् परिउमन् नोनुवन्तः माताः ॥

It is surprising that Indra instead of taking to the breasts of his mother began to drink the Soma juice as soon after as he was born. (Rig-Veda 3-32-9).

(सद्यो यज्जातो अपिबो ह सोमम् ॥)

Indra was very handsome to look at. His neck was strong and solid; his stomach was spacious, his arms were sinewy and steel-like which extended right upto his knees. It was this gift of long arms that enabled Indra to vanquish his enemies on the battlefield. The whole frame and appearance of the war-god was impressive and awe-inspiring. It appeared

that he could hold the heaven and earth in the grip of his single hand. Indra who is ageless and immortal is for ever young, lovely and strong. (Rig-Veda 5-33-6).

In another place a poet tells us that summers and winters do not affect Indra. Age brings no infirmity to him. This Indra who is worshipped by his followers always grows stronger by the songs which are sung in his praise. He never submits to a haughty opponent nor surrenders to murderers sent by infidels. The highest peaks of mountains or the deepest depths of water appear to be flat for Indra. Indra is so spacious and strong in person. He is equally sharp and penetrating in intellect. This valiant and lustrous Indra who is the master of all wealths; the repository of all strengths he is a generous distributor of all blessings; he has also a sterling, spotless character. No one can defy his control or directions. Even the gods including Varuna, abide by his orders.

Such a super-god that Indra was, it was right that people recognised his prowess and sought his protection by choosing him as their leader. They had realised that in the event of war when the enemies of the Devas attacked them, it is only the power of war-god Indra that succeeds. (Rig-Veda 6-17-8). Thus Indra had attained the sovereign and supreme place in the pantheon of Bharatiya gods by his invincible valour. (Rig-Veda 3-46-2).

If it is true that gods are made in the images of men, then it must equally be true that the arms and weapons which their ideal war-lord used must have been those that prevailed in the age. Let us therefore now turn to the arms and weapons, the missiles and the mantras of the Vedic soldier, and try to know more about the army and the military system of the Aryas.

This supreme war-lord Indra, who had established himself as the sovereign ruler of the universe was selected by the Aryas as their ideal hero to be worshipped and invoked in every difficulty and danger of the Vedic nation. Whenever Indra was solicited by his devotees, he rushed down in his spacious and solid chariot which was faster than thought. The chariot was specially prepared for Indra by 'Twashta', the architect of the gods. Indra's chariot had grey horses, which

were brought up by the 'Ribhus'. The horses were strong in body, bright in appearance, with their tails resembling the peacock's plumage. The horses were ever-ready, never exhausted. Indra used a whip which had a golden handle. His bow was long and heavy and its middle was made of gold. (Rig-Veda 8-77-11).

तुषिष्ठतं ते सुसंस्कृतं सुमयं धनुः साधुर्बुधो हिरण्मयः ॥

Indra had a lance and a sword also amongst his arms, which contained many other weapons of war, sharp and very effective, all made of bones of the sage Dadhichi. But, of all these weapons the most favourite and the most frightful was the reputed world-conquering 'Vajra'. 'Vajra' was considered to be the exclusive weapon with which Indra was identified and invariably associated. The 'Vajra' of Indra was made of the bones of Dadhichi as strong as steel. It had thousand sharp blades with hundred points. It shone sparkling white. This 'Vajra' which was manufactured by the divine architect 'Twashta' was so terrible a weapon that when it was first dropped on the demon 'Vritra', it created such a horrifying thunderous roaring that both the earth and heaven began to shake. (Rig-Veda 2-11-9).

अरेजतां रोदसीभियानेकनिकदतो वृष्णो अस्य वज्रात् ।

Amongst the numerous exploits of Indra only a few could be mentioned here. In olden days the mountains were imagined to have wings with which they soared high in the skies and concealed the Sun. Lord Indra cut off the wings of the mountains and restored the Sun to the people. It was Indra who steadied the stars, constellations, the heaven and the earth, and by destroying Vritra made the waters which were dammed up, flow again, Indra destroyed besides Vritra, a large number of Asuras like Shushna, Chumuri, Namuchi, Pipru, the lord of demons Shambara who had hidden himself in the interior of his hundred castles. Indra vanquished and killed other wicked Asuras also, chief among whom were Ahi, Arbuda, Mrigaya, Srubinda, Anarshani, Dasa, Ahishu and Krishnasur. When the cows of the Aryas had been taken away by the Panis, Indra attacked thirty thousand of them and

crushed them totally for the sake of Dabhiti. It was Indra again who killed the enemies of Aryas like Kavi Chayamana, Shruta Kavasha, Vriddha, Druhyu, Bheda, Devaka and Shinyu, all of whom were god-haters and demonic in their characters. Such a unique heroic god-head who had bestowed the Bharatbhoomi on the Aryas rightly became not only their war-god but also the national deity. The Brihaddevata defines Indra as the centre and foundation of all life in the universe.

The Vedic nation which had held Indra as their principal national deity, evolved a science of war for self-protection and defence of its culture and civilisation. This science of war was called 'Dhanur-Veda'. It was considered to be a supplement of the Atharva-Veda. On account of the love of the Aryas for their most favourite weapon, the bow, they called the treatise on military science as 'Dhanur-Veda'. The bow stands as the symbol of the Vedic arms, and its significance is so great as to inspire some eloquent verses in Rig-Veda. The Vedic people aspired to capture the cattle-wealth of their enemies with the power of the bow. 'We shall vanquish our adversaries on the strength of our bows; with bow and arrows we shall defeat any strong force of the enemies; our bow will defeat all the wishes and ambitions of the enemies; with the bow we shall conquer all the directions.' That was the confidence of the Vedic Aryas who used the bow more than any other weapon in wars. A Vedic poet in a charming imagination tells us how 'the string of the bow is pulled right to the ear by the hero, as if to allow it to whisper sweetly or embrace it. The ends of the bow bend before the hero like devoted wives. The arrows released from the bow reach their targets to break open the chests of the enemies. And look to this quiver which is the father of many arrows. The quiver carries a number of arrows and is tied at his back by the hero. The archer produces the arrows from the quiver and hurls them in the midst of the enemy's army, which is completely destroyed. The arrows have an ivory knob at one end and a golden tail at the other. The arrows are wound up with the twines of bull-hide. Such an arrow never misses its

target whether it is single or a troop of enemies, the arrow does its work successfully. (Rig-Veda 6-75-2 to 5-11).

धन्वना गाः धन्वना अजिं जयेम धन्वना तीव्रा समदाः जयेम ।
 धनुः शत्रोः अपकामं करोति धन्वना सर्वाः प्रदिशः जयेम ॥ २ ॥
 दक्ष्यन्ती इव इत् आगनी गन्ति कर्णं प्रियं सखायं परि सस्वजाना ।
 योषा इव शिङ्के वितता अधिधन्वन् ज्या इयं समने पारयन्ती ॥ ६ ॥
 ते आचरन्ती समना इव योषा माता इव पुत्रं बिभृतां उपस्थे ।
 अप शत्रून् विध्यतां संविदाने आर्त्ता ईमे विस्फुरन्ती अमित्रान् ॥ ४ ॥
 बह्वीनां पिता बहु अस्य पुत्रः चित्राकृणोति समना भवगत्या ।
 इषुधिः सङ्काः पृतना च सर्वाः पृष्ठे निनद्धः जयाति प्रसूतः ॥ ५ ॥
 सुपर्ण दस्ते मृगः अस्याः दन्तः गोभिः सन्नद्धा पतति प्रसूता ।
 यत्र नरः सं च वि च द्रवन्ति तत्र अस्मभ्यं इषवः शर्म यंसन् ॥ ११ ॥

Right since the Vedic times upto Ramayana and Mahabharat periods and more or less upto the age of Harshavardhan the bow and arrow has been the most common powerful weapon of the Arya people. The greatest Bharatiya heroes Rama, Arjuna, Bhishma, Drona, Karna, Abhimanyu and others were all great because of their supreme mastery over the art of archery. It is for this reason that the science of arms has been symbolically called 'Dhanur-Veda'. It does not merely contain information about bows and arrows, but also of other arms, missiles and mantras used in warfare.

The Dhanur-Veda is a supplement of the Atharva-Veda. Vishwamitra is reputed to be the author and propagator of the 'science of weapons' as contained in the Dhanur-Veda. This treatise classifies the weapons in two categories, namely, the offensive and the defensive. Both the classes are further divided into four categories: (1) the Mukta, (2) the Amukta, (3) the Muktamukta and (4) the Yantramukta, according to the manner in which a weapon is used. The Mukta type is one in which a weapon is hurled at the enemy. The Amukta is that with which a warrior strikes the enemy without losing it, and there is the next type in which a weapon was either released by the force of a machine or the power of a Mantra.

The bow and arrow fall in the first class, bows were of different kinds, and were called 'Sharang', 'Kodanda', 'Karmuk', 'Pinak', etc. It is forgotten or rather cannot be satisfactorily explained if these different terms are simply synonymous or actually mean different types of bows.

The Rig-Veda mentions a class of artisans which it calls 'Ishukar', meaning the 'maker of arrows'. It will be realised how in those ancient days in which battles and wars between tribes, races and kingdoms were a common fact of life, this class of artisans must have been busy in the manufacturing of arrows for the warriors. The arrow itself was of different makes and designs according to the desired uses for which specific materials were utilised. This artisan must have been ever busy in manufacturing the sharp ends of the arrows with metals of different types and tempers. These sharp ends which had to penetrate the targets to be effective were the main parts of the arrows. They required skilful artisanship. The Rig-Vedic artisan had achieved miraculous mastery over the blending of metals and raising their tempers. The art was of course handed down from sire to son right upto the days of Prithwiraj Chauhan, whose arrows according to historical evidence, could penetrate even through seven plates of steel or armours. The Vedic literature abounds in descriptions of effectiveness of the arrows and the marksmanship of the warriors. Vedic poets have ascribed special qualities to specific parts of the arrows. For instance, the mouth of the arrow was considered to be consecrated by Agni (the fire), the steel blade was sanctified by Soma; the sharp point which is the most effective part in an arrow was identified with Maha Vishnu. Such an arrow which carried with it the potency of the powerful deities was calculated to accomplish the desire of the warrior, namely, the death of the enemy, or the destruction of the target. The idea in the sharp point of an arrow being identified with Lord Vishnu was that, the god-head who is considered to be the protecting element, would come out with all his wrath to work out the destruction of the evil for the protection of the good, in the natural dispensation of justice. Never did an Arya act or do anything without a moral justification.

The weapons of the first category are of twelve kinds of which the bow was the first in the list and unique in its importance. A bow used to be four hand-measures (about 72 inches) in length. It was made of three parts in which it could be folded or separated. The three parts used to be made of either of steel, horns, wood and cane. They were joined and tied together with seasoned strings of bull's sinews. The warrior used to have a leather wristlet to protect the wrist from the frequent striking of the strong bow-string. This wristlet was called 'Manibandh'. There used to be similar finger-guards, which were called 'Godhangulitran' because they were made of 'Godhamrug', a species of deer. Marks made by the bow string on his arms used to be a matter of pride for the warrior.

Bows were also of various lengths according to the requirements of uses and the users. The bow resembled the eyebrows of a woman and became a standard of comparison. They were richly decorated with costly metals, stones and jewels. When not in use the bow was folded and kept well wrapped.

The Dhanur-Veda mentions a drill of the archers in 14 formations. The formations were employed in different situations.

The bow being the most important weapon of ancient times with Bharatiya heroes, as it was with the Greeks later on attained unique significance in the armoury of the nation. Every great hero came to have his own individual bow with meaningful names, like the swords, the conches, trumpets, etc., of famous warriors. In Mahabharat we get fascinating accounts of different kinds of bows of the Bharatiya heroes. In the Virat Parva there was an occasion when out of the weapons of the five Pandavas, Arjuna's bow had to be taken down from the 'Shami' tree on which they were concealed for one year. 'Uttar' who climbed up the tree on behest of Arjuna found the different bows together from which he wanted to pick up Arjuna's 'Gandiva'. Being unable to identify, he describes them all and asks Arjuna to say which one belonged to him. The descriptions distinguish the different bows from each other by their lengths, shapes,

metals, blades, and the engravings with gold stones and jewels as also the pictures drawn on them. There is no reason to doubt that the bows and other weapons in the Vedic period were also distinctive of the heroes and the gods who used them.

There is a specific mention of different kinds of animals whose horns were used in the manufacture of bows. The wood that was commonly used in making the bows was of Sandal, Shalmali, Sal and the Bamboo. The Bamboo was of course very suitable for the manufacture of bows on account of its elasticity and strength. The materials out of which the bows and arrows of famous Bharatiya warriors were made have been fully described in old literature. The famous bow of Srikrishna which was known as Sharang was made of horns. The bow of Arjuna was made of very seasoned heavy wood and its handle was of gold.

Kautilya in his Arthashastra mentions four kinds of bows, namely, 'Karmuka', 'Kodanda', 'Druna' and 'Dhanu'. He tells us that Karmuka was made with the wood of a palm tree, the Kodanda of a bamboo cane, the Druna with Sandal wood and the last Dhanu of bones and horns.

The classification of these bows was determined by their weights, and strengths of their cords. Kautilya briefly mentions how they were classified. There is a treatise called 'Kodanda Mandan', dealing with the bow as weapon which mentions 18 kinds of bows according to their weights. The Dhanur-Veda mentions bows weighing between 2 palash to 1000 palash.

Readers will recollect how gigantic and unwieldy was the bow of Shiva in the court of Janak which even Ravan could not lift; but which broke down when Ram handled it. The Mahabharata mentions that the great Brahman hero Ashvathama could not lift the Sharang of Srikrishna.

It was very natural that the bow should become a test to measure the strength and marksmanship of a hero. It was therefore employed by kings to select their sons-in-law by examining their physical strength measured by their ability to handle a difficult bow or to hit a next-to-impossible target. There are innumerable anecdotes of chivalry how great war-

riors succeeded in the uncommon tests of their strength, before they could get the reward of a handsome princess. The 'Sita Swayamvar' 'Draupadi Swayamvar' are famous instances of this ancient practice.

Like Bharat, the Greek nation was also the user of the bows and arrows. The Greeks were indeed great archers, but on comparison between the two, Bharatiya archery has been found to excel the Greek. The Greek bow was only so high as to touch the chest of the warrior, whereas the Bharatiya bow was required to touch the ear of the warrior. The bow was one weapon the use of which was required to be a common proficiency for every warrior. The Bharatiya warriors had attained a very high degree of merit in the art of archery. Prof. Wilson has noted how the Bharatiya soldiers could use their bows from the backs of galloping horses.

As we have described the bow at certain length, it would be proper to say about the arrow which is a very important part of the weapon. In fact it is the arrow that strikes at the enemy and the effectiveness very much depends upon the make and metal of the arrow. The bow in Sanskrit is called the seat of the arrow. It is almost a machine to release the arrow. The arrow was generally three hands (about 54 inches) in length. The Shatpath Brahman calls arrow by the general term 'Shar' and gives the following etymology:

'Indra hurled his Vajra at the demon Vritra. It killed him; but the Vajra itself broke into four pieces. Of one piece was manufactured a knife called "Spha" for the priest called "Agnidhra" in the use of a sacrifice. The second part was used as a pillar to tie the sacrificial animal. The third part was used in preparing a chariot and the fourth which fell down on the earth was called "Shar" Shatpath Brahman, 1-2-4). Thus it will be seen that the arrow is traced to the divine weapon Vajra.

In the arrow itself the most valuable portion is the pointed blade which is compared by the Vedic writers to the fire in the sacrifice. The arrow was either manufactured wholly out of steel or a portion of it of steel and the rest of a cane-stick which was coloured gold. The arrows of famous warriors bore their names. Such were the arrows of Karna as mentioned in

Mahabharat. At the tail end of the arrow feathers were attached to accelerate the speed. The middle portion of the arrow carried some engravings in gold studded with ivory and at times with jewels pieces.

The Dhanur-Veda mentions three types of "Bana", the arrow, according to its length. Kautilya classified them into five kinds; Vasishtha describes the arrow called "Narach". In the use of the bow and arrow, the thumb was the most important organ. The famous anecdote of Ekalavya illustrates how great the use of the thumb was. The master preceptor of archery, Drona, in order to safeguard his dearest pupil's Arjuna's excellence, demanded the offering of the thumb as "Guru Dakshina" from Ekalavya who had stealthily learnt the art of archery from Drona.

Like the Greeks, the Bharatiya heroes also endeavoured to excel in the use of the bow and arrow. Foreign visitors to Bharat have recorded their impressions of the amazing skill of Bharatiya warriors. Arian describes how a Bharatiya archer could rest his bow's end on the ground and release the arrows most skilfully at the enemies at a long distance. He says: "There is nothing which can resist an Indian archer's shot; neither shield nor breast-plate nor any stronger defence if such there be." (Indica of Arian by Macrindle).

Lord Mahadeva was the deity of the art and science of weapons. The Mahabharat gives an enchanting picture of this godhead. The Greeks had Apollo as the god of archery. Even in the opinion of Greek writers, Bharatiya archery was superior to their's. This can be very well imagined from the opinion of an ancient writer given above. Ramayana and Mahabharata are the big books which bear testimony to the supreme skill of Bharatiya archers; and the art was not lost even up to the days of Prithwiraj Chauhan. Prithwiraj, the last Rajput ruler of Delhi of the thirteenth century was one of the greatest archers known to history of any time. He had mastered the art in all its details. With his eyes blindfolded, he could hit the target simply by the hearing of a sound and even when this was not available, he could hit the bull's eye if somebody correctly described to him the direction, distance and the height of the target. The grand epic of Prithwiraj

describes how this great archer living as a blind prisoner of Shahbuddin Ghorî killed him with an arrow simply by the directions given to him by his poet-friend, Chand.

There are a very large number of other weapons enumerated and described in literature on weapons. Bhindipal, Shakti, Drughana, Tomara, Nalika, Lagud, Pash, Chakra, Dantakant, Musundi, etc., are other chief among the innumerable arms and weapons in the armoury of the Bharatiyas. The Bharatiyas were a martial people and had devised different weapons for different occasions and uses.

The Lagud, the Pash and the Chakra were other effective weapons. The Chakra which was considered to be the most frightful, was used by Lord Srikrishna. The Chakra in the hands of Srikrishna was called Sudarshana because of its enchanting brilliance and light. Kautilya puts the Chakra into the category of a moving weapon.

Coming to the 'Amukta' type we find 21 varieties of the weapons mentioned in the Dhanur-Veda. They are: Vajra, Pattisha, Parashu, Goshiras, Ishu, Asidhenu or Asiyashti, Astara, Lavitra, Kunt, Sthoon, Pras, Pinak, Gada, Mudgar, Shir, Musal, Mushtik, Parigh, Mayukhi, Shataghni, Asi or Khadg.

We have already described in detail the Vajra which in the hands of Lord Indra had acquired unforgettable name for its prowess of killing the demon Vritra.

The *Pattish* is the same as the modern Bharatiya Patta, a sort of strong strap which was used as a weapon by Shivaji and his soldiers.

Ishu is a smaller sword resembling an arrow with a broader blade. Its front portion was a little curved and the length was about two hands or 36 inches. The Dhanur-Veda describes four kinds of demonstrations of this weapon. In the fight between Lakshmana and Atikaya, a son of Ravana, the latter had used this weapon.

Parashu was the weapon which became very frightful in the hands of Parashuram, the 6th Divine Incarnation.

Goshiras was a sort of a lance with its blade 24 inches long resembling the horns of a cow. Five kinds of exercises with this weapon have been described in the Dhanur-Veda. It is a

traditional legend that Lord Mahendra had presented this weapon to the king Manu.

Asidhenu is an 18-inches long knife which was used in hand-to-hand fights, Kautilya names this weapon as *Asiyashti*.

Lavitra was very much like our scythe with a very sharp point. It had a broad handle and was used by both hands.

Astara was a weapon both ends of which could be used to attack the adversary.

Kunt was a special lance which had six sharp edges at its end. Made of iron according to Sukracharya, the lance used to be ten hands (180 inches) in length and very helpful in averting the attack of the enemy. This weapon is mentioned in the *Rig-Veda*. Kautilya refers to three varieties of *Kunt* according to their lengths.

Sthoon was straight like a pillar of a man's height with iron balls at its striking end.

Prass is another kind of a lance from four to seven hands in length with a very sharp penetrating end. *Prass* has been mentioned in the *Rig-Veda*. Kautilya also refers to this weapon. Four kinds of demonstrations of this weapon are recommended.

The Pinak reputed in the mythological literature to belong to Lord Shankara is a peculiar kind of a bow. But according to commentator Aushanasa, *Pinak* was the *Trisula* of Shankara. It was so named because of its three tongues which struck the target.

Gada was a solid mace of iron with as many as 100 sharp points on the striking round end. This *Gada* used to be four hand-measures in length. Twenty exercises of this weapon have been described in the *Dhanur-Veda*. The *Gada* could smash the temples of elephants or the walls of a citadel. It was a well-known convention not to strike the adversary with the mace below navel of a man, or as we call it below the belt. Bhima violated this time-honoured convention and killed Duryodhana in the Mahabharat war. This of course enraged Balaram, the master of mace-warfare who, it is said, rushed to punish Bhima.

Mudgar is an iron rod of 54 inches with a striking end like that of a hammer. Its handle used to be round.

Shir was something like a plough with two tongues bent at the end. It was as high as a man.

Musal was a solid rod, in fact, a pestle to pound any one to powder. Its one end was of iron and the handle made of Khadir tree. *Musal* was a pet weapon of Balaram.

Mushtika was a short hand-knife specially useful in duels. Its shining blade has been often compared with the young moon's face by poets.

Parigh was a very heavy round rod.

Mayukhi was also a strong stick with the handle like that of a sword. It was as long as the height of a man and was adorned by small jingling bells.

In both *Khadg* and the *Mayukhi* a shield was necessary for protection.

The Shataghni was a weapon which could deliver death to hundred persons at a time. The *Shataghni* was 72 inches long and resembled a *Gada* or the mace. It was studded with sharp steel-nails to make it very strong. The *Shataghni* is imagined by many to be like a modern cannon in its destructive action. Acharya Kautilya puts the *Shataghni* in the class of a mechanical weapon. The *Shataghni* used to be put on the ramparts and walls of castles.

The Asi is the last in the list of *Amukta* weapons. The *Asi* or the sword was an indispensable and very handy weapon which every *Bharatiya* soldier carried on the left side of his waist-belt. The sharp sword was of multifarious uses. The *Bharatiyas* have named their swords in so many ways according to their purposes, makes and metals.

It is doubtful if we can find so many different names and types of swords in any other nation's armoury. The *Mahabharata* refers to the sword as the first weapon through which the divine power of protection of the good and destruction of the evil elements manifested itself. It came to the hands of Rudra first who gave it to Vishnu. Vishnu gave it to Manu, Ikshwaku, and so further down. The '*Nakshatra*' (lunar mansion) which sanctifies this weapon is '*Krittika*' (Pleiades); its deity is fire and its follower is the star *Rohini*. Rudra was the first godhead who used the sword.

Besides the weapons mentioned above, there were what we may call missiles known as 'Astras' then. From the very common recurring descriptions with all the details of the manner of use and their effects as we gather from the Vedic literature, the Ramayan, the Mahabharat, etc., it is very hard to discard these 'Astras' or missiles merely as poetic fancies. The missiles were of so numerous types and potencies that it will not be possible to enumerate all of them here. It must not however be supposed that all the missiles were delivered by chanting of 'Mantras' and charms. Vaishampayan of Mahabharata, has named six missiles which were released by the chanting of mantras. They were 'Vishnu-Chakra', 'Vajra', 'Brahmastra', 'Kalapasha', 'Narayanastra' and 'Pashupatastra'. Vishwamitra, the pioneer of Dhanur-Veda was, it is regarded, not only a master in the use of these Astras, but the inventor himself. These 'Astras' according to Kautilya were mechanical missiles. Kautilya details in his treatise an experiment of the 'Agneyastra'—the fire missile. Some of the Astras mentioned by Kautilya were: 'Sarvatobhadra', 'Jamadagnya', 'Bahumukh', 'Vishwasghati', 'Sanghati', 'Yanak', 'Parjanya', 'Bahu', 'Ardhabahu', etc., etc.

The Sarvatobhadra was a machine which showered a volley of stones on the enemy from all sides. The Jamadagnya released very sharp and terrible arrows on the enemy. The Vishwasghati was a hidden beam in the gate of the castle which was brought down suddenly on the enemy entering into the castle by breaking through the walls. This mechanical device came so suddenly as the enemy was taken unaware and killed on the spot. The Sanghati was a mechanical device to engineer fire into the enemy's forts and camps. The Parjanya was another device which extinguished fire caused by the Sanghati. In short, the word 'Astra' was generally used to denote a device working mechanically or by the force of a 'Mantra'. As such this science of missiles, 'Astras', was considered to be a part of the mechanical weapons.

It will be recognised that even in the modern machine age, there are certain formulae or secrets which are absolutely undivulged. A Mantra in its etymological sense meant only a secret formula. It should not therefore be difficult to imagine

that even the Vedic Bharatiyas had some sort of mechanical weapons. That was indeed the measure of their civilization and scientific progress.

We have so far referred to the weapons of offence—the sword, the disc, the lance, the Parashu, etc., etc., which have been mentioned very familiarly in the older mantras of the Rig-Veda. We will now look to the defensive arms and armours. The Rig-Veda mentions a shield, a helmet and a finger guard and a wrist-band, latter of which were smaller devices to protect the different organs and parts of the body from the attacks of enemy's arms. The shield was called 'Druti' in the Veda. There was another variety which was called 'Varman' which though of steel was however of a very fine make with golden decoration work on it. This indicates the excellent stage of workmanship of the time. The helmet of the Vedic times was called 'Shipra'. 'O king, you shall wear a shield when you go to fight in the field. A king in his armour and helmet becomes impressive and frightful like a heavy cloud. Let the strength of the shield protect you in the battle.' Such used to be the advice given by Vedic sages to their kings. (Rig-Veda 6-75-1).

जीमूतस्यैव भवति प्रतीकं यद्वर्षीयाति समदामस्यै ।

अनाविद्धया तन्वाजयस्वं सत्त्वा बर्मेणो महिमा पिपतुं ॥

All these the shield, armour, etc., were generally manufactured with the hides of different animals which are also named. As in other things, the varieties of armours and shields have also been mentioned in the Vedic as well as the legendary literature.

Coming to other arms and accessories in warfare, we discover a variety of war-drums and such other instruments. The Vedic literature contains reference to three types of musical instruments. Some are for use on religious and festive occasions and some in cultural and art demonstrations. Some others are purely meant for use on the battlefield. A number of instruments are of course common which are used everywhere. 'Aghati' meaning Cymbals, 'Karkari' meaning 'Veena', 'Gargar', 'Godha', 'Trinava'—all meaning the flute, 'Druvay',

'Nalika', 'Admbar', 'Kanda-Veena', etc., were some soft and sweet sounding instruments used in sacrificial festivities or in dance, drama and such other cultural performances. 'Bakur' was a trumpet used exclusively to rouse the soldiers to action. According to some others, it is a 'Karna', a loud sounding trumpet. In the first Mandala of Rig-Veda Ashwinis are described to have used this instrument to enthuse their soldiers to action against the Dasyus.

Bheri, Mahabheri, Dundhubhi—all three varieties of a drum were used in battles or even in social and religious functions to invite the attention of the soldiers or the public. Dundubhi appears to be a very popular instrument of the Vedic nation. Of the two varieties, namely, the Rana-Dundubhi and the Bhoomi-Dundubhi, the latter was a very interesting one. It was so called because of the hide being spread over a big hollow made in the earth. This Dundubhi was sounded with a bull's tail. It was very much used in order to wake up and beckon the members of the assembly as well as the citizens of a place in the event of serious danger. The Mahabharata describes how the assembly of the Yadavas was rallied by the sounding of this Bhoomi-Dundubhi when Arjuna carried away Subhadra, the sister of Balaram and Krishna. There is another reference in the Mahabharata of the seven Bhoomi-Dundubhis on the outskirts of Girivraj, the capital of Jarasandha. When Srikrishna, Bhimsena and Arjuna, went to destroy Jarasandha, they tore off the hides of these earth-drums first.

The Rana-Dundubhi was generally used to convey the instructions to soldiers to attack, to withdraw or follow some other action. The Rana-Dundubhi was the most inspiring and exhilarating an instrument which infused valour and excitement in the Vedic soldiers. The Vedic bards have poured out hymns after hymns in the Rig-Veda and Atharva-Veda which resound with the cheerful and spirited echoes of the Dundubhi.

Listen for instance what the Vedic war-poets say about the beating of the Dundubhi:

'May you fill courage in this earth and the sky with all its stars and constellations which are as if it were apprehending their fall. This world which is, so to say, shaking with fear

may you give it a sense of safety with thy beatings. O war-drum, may you be able to maintain harmony and co-operation between Indra and his horde of divine friends, so that with their help you can drive as far away as possible our enemies. May you sound as loudly as to enthuse the spirit and rouse our strength. The dangers and difficulties run away with your sound. May you therefore resound very loudly. O Dundubhi; with your loud beatings all our dangers will vanish. You are indeed the strength in the wrist of Indra. May you therefore wake up; lead that army this way in front and turn this one round. Listen to this war-call of the battle-drum that is apprising of the fight and the field. Our heroic soldiers are as if it were moving like winds on the wings of horses. O Indra, with thy blessings let our charioteers turn out victorious. Rig-Veda 6-40, 7-29 to 31).

उपश्वासय पृथिवीम् उत द्याम् पुरुषा ते मनुताम् विस्थितम् जगत् ।

सः दुन्दुभे सज्जः इन्द्रेण देवैः दूरात् दवीयः अप सेध सत्रन् ॥ २९ ॥

आ कन्द्य बलं ओजः नः आ धाः निः स्तनिहि दुःइता बाधमानः ।

अप प्रोथ दुन्दुभे दुक्कुना इतः इन्द्रस्य मुष्टिः असि वीळ्यस्व ॥ ३० ॥

आ अमूः अज प्रतिऽआवर्तय इमाः केतुमत् दुन्दुभिः वावदीति ।

समश्चपर्णाः चरन्ति नः नरः अस्माकं इन्द्र रथिनः जयन्तु ॥ ३१ ॥

This description of the Dundubhi in the Rig-Veda towards light upon the utility and the function of the war-drums. Varied types of drum notes used to be sounded to give special instructions and commands to the army in movement or development, attacks or retreats. The above verses indicate very clearly that almost all the functions which the band-corps performs in modern times had been done in the Rig-Vedic age by the crude drums and trumpets. The description in the Atharva-Veda of the sounds and stirs created by the Dundubhi are more realistic and enchanting. In the following verses we see a lively sense of how the Dundubhi moved in the battle-field roaring like a lion.

'Look to this Dundubhi, made of wooden pieces, tied with strong leather cords. The Dundubhi which behaves like a hero in the battle-field is making a frightening sound enervat-

ing the enemy. O Dundubhi, may you roar like a lion, a bull in the herd of cows may you resound in the vanquished enemy camps and gather plunder as well as cattle; may your beatings break the hearts of the enemy forcing them to abandon their homes and habitations. O Dundubhi, may your sound fill the hollow between the sky overhead and the surface of this earth; may that sound travel to all directions and fill them; may you grow louder and louder as you march ahead from success for the benefit of your friends. This Dundubhi is awakened by the promptings of intelligence. May you impel the armed-hands of the heroes to rise high. You that please the hearts of the brave, may you be able to incite the warriors and may you succeed in destroying the enemy with the co-operation of friends. O Dundubhi, you are indeed a benefactor, the collector of wealth, a great enduring victor in the battlefield. You are indeed the creation of intelligence. While the Soma juice is extracted, a stone has to dance on the Soma plant; may you like that Soma dance in the battlefield to extract the riches and land of the enemy.' (Atharva-Veda 5-20).

उच्चैर्घोषो दुन्दुभिः सत्त्वनायन् वानस्पत्यः संभृत उस्त्रियाभिः ।

वाचं क्षुणुवान्नी दमयन्सपन्नन् सिंह इव जेष्यन्नभि तंस्तनीहि ॥ १ ॥

वृषेव यूथे सहमा विदानो गव्यन्नभि रुव संन्धनाजित् ।

शुचा विष्य हृदयं परेषां हित्वा ग्रामान् प्रच्युता यन्तु शत्रवः ॥ ३ ॥

अन्तरेमे नभसी घोषो कस्तु पृथक् ते च्कनयो यन्तु शीभम् ।

अभिक्रन्द स्तनयोत्पिपानः श्लोककृन्मित्रतूर्याय स्वर्धौ ॥ ७ ॥

धीभिः कृतः प्रवदति वाचमुद्धर्षय सत्त्वनाम युधानि ।

इंद्रमेदी सत्त्वनो निह्वयस्व नित्रंरमित्रौ मदजह्वनीहि ॥ ८ ॥

श्रेयः केतो वसुजित् सहीयान् संग्रामजित् संशितो ब्रह्मणासि ।

अंशनिव प्रावाधिषवणे अद्विर्गव्यन् दुन्दुभेधि नृत्य वेदः ॥ १० ॥

'O Dundubhi, let your sounds dishearten and depress the minds of our enemies; may your beating fill the hearts of our enemies with hatred, jealousy and self-damaging feuds and fears, so that you will be able to help us in defeating our enemies. In that little time which is required to offer the ghee-oblation in the fire, may you be able to exhibit and

declare our prowess which will frighten the enemies, who will run away from the battlefield with their minds and hearts broken down by fear. The jungle animals decamp at the sight of a man; the sheep and goats flee away in fear at the sight of a jackal; the hawk puts the smaller birds of prey to their wings and the roaring of a lion melts the hearts of every one; let your frightening thunder strike the enemy with horror, and confusion. It is our experience that the war-gods help their followers by striking the enemy first with fear by the sounds of the thundering war-drums made of deer-hides. O Dundubhi, let your rolling sound reverberate along with the vibrating twang of the bow's cord; that mixed sound will defeat the hordes of the enemy and put them to flight.' (Atharva-Veda 5-20-21).

विहृदयं वैमनस्यं वदामित्रेषु दुन्दुभे ।

विद्वेषं कश्मशं भयममित्रेषु नि दध्मस्यवैनान् दुन्दुभे जहि ॥ १ ॥

उद्वेपमाना मनसा चक्षुषा हृदयेन च ।

धावन्तु बिभ्यतोऽमित्राः प्रत्रासेनाज्ये हुते ॥ २ ॥

यथा मृगाः संविजन्त आरण्याः पुरुषादधि ।

एवा त्वं दुन्दुभेऽमित्रानभि कन्द प्रत्रासयाथो चित्तानि मोहम् ॥ ४ ॥

यथावृक्षादजावयो धावन्ति बहु बिभ्यतीः

एवात्वं

॥ ५ ॥

यथाश्वेनात् पतत्रिणः सविजन्ते अहर्दिवि सिंहस्यस्तनयोर्यथा ।

एवात्वं

॥ ६ ॥

परामित्रान् दुन्दुभिना हरिणस्याजिनेन च ।

सर्वे देवा अतित्रसन् ये संग्रामस्येशते ॥ ७ ॥

ज्याघौषा दुन्दुभयोऽभि क्रोशन्तु या दिशः ।

सेनाः पराजिता यतीरमित्राणामनीकशः ॥ ९ ॥

Thus we have seen how high was the regard and dependence of the Vedic warriors on the war-drums as the provokers of their war-spirit.

Like the Dundubhi 'Shankh' (a conch) was a very common instrument of the ancient Bharatiya soldier. The blowing of the conches was the common manner of announc-

ing so many things and inviting the attention of the public in towns and villages, as well as of the soldiers on the battlefield. A conch like a bow and a sword, was a piece in the personal equipment of a Bharatiya soldier. A very picturesque description of the zero hour, the sign to strike on the battlefield of Kurukshetra at the commencement of action between the Pandavas and Kauravas, has been drawn in the Mahabharat. We are told by the war reporter Sānjay how when the two armies led by their great warriors stood face to face, the grandest old man, the greatest of Bharatiya warriors, Bhishma, first blew his conch. Then followed the rolling sound of thousands and thousands of the conches which filled the air and skies. The reporter describes how many different types of personal instruments like 'Turya', 'Panava', 'Anaka', 'Bheri' and 'Gomukh', etc., were blown by the unrivalled warriors, that the combined sounds rising on the battlefield almost tore the hearts of the hundred sons of Dhritarashtra. These Bharatiya warriors greatly valued their arms, weapons and instruments of war. We have noted the names of their arrows and swords. The Mahabharata mentions by names the conches of the Pandavas. Srikrishna's conch was famous as 'Panchjanya'. Panchjanya was obtained by Srikrishna from a demon killed by him. Arjuna's conch was given to him by Lord Indra and therefore it was called Devadatta. Anantvijay, Sughosh, Manipushpak, were other poetic and meaningful names of the conches of the Pandavas. It was a common practice for every warrior, small or big, to name his own weapons and instruments. It will be noted here that there were two classes of musical instruments taken to war-fields. Like the war-provoking and spirit-invigorating instruments to be used on the field for the directions of the armies, there was a bunch of softer musical pieces carried to the military camps to entertain the soldiers at rest.

Now we refer to one controversial question if there is evidence in favour of the existence of gun-powder in the ancient history of Bharat. Very much related or inter-dependent problem that strikes an inquirer is if there is proof to suggest that there were guns and cannons in those ancient times. Sir A. M. Elliot has upheld the view that the Arabs must have

learnt the art of preparing gun-powder from the Hindus of Hindustan. Before these people began to use gun-powder, they used arrows with their tips besmeared with explosive muds and oils. The ingredients for the production of gun-powder were no doubt available in Persia. But, the invention and art of manufacturing it was developed only in India. The modern word 'Toap' which the Turkish people borrowed from the Persian 'Tupang' or 'Tufang', according to etymologists, has its origin in the Sanskrit word 'Dhup'. The word 'Dhup' has been used in the Agni Purana to mean a fire-arrow or a fire-stick. Kautilya uses the word 'Nala deepika' to import the same meaning. It therefore appears that even in the Vedic times and more certainly in the Maurya era, some sort of an explosive or a fire-shooting instrument was in vogue. In the Agni hymn, a Rig-Vedic poet invokes Agni to burn out the enemy who had joined hands with Rakshasas. It cannot be supposed the Rig-Vedic poet was so simpleton as to imagine that Agni, the presiding deity of all fires, would perform the task of burning out the hordes of enemies unless a spark of fire was thrown at the enemy.

And now we come to a little more interesting, and intriguing too, piece of evidence which almost suggests that there was not only the gun and the gun-powder in those days but a bullet of lead also. In the Atharva-Veda there is an explicit mention of the lead-bullets. In the Sukta called 'Chor-nasan' meaning the 'destruction of the thieves', the poet reports a threat delivered to the thieves, that if he dared to break the house or steal the treasures, he would do so at the risk of being shot by a gun bullet. The poet says:

'We have been already warned by those who know of the possibility of the dacoits raiding on our commune in the dark night of Amavasya. But, Lord Varuna has taught us the use of "Seesam" (lead-bullets). Lord Indra has actually gifted these lead-bullets to us. This lead-bullet has the strength to disperse the bandits; they can certainly give pain to those who unnecessarily obstruct us; these bullets have enough fire in them to drive away blood-thirsty gangs. O, you robber, if you kill my cow or horse or my men, remember, I will pierce you

through with my bullet. Do not forget that once that is done you will not live a moment to harass us.' (Atharva-Veda 1-16)

येऽमावास्यां रात्रिमुदस्थुर्वाजमित्रणः ।

अग्निस्तुरीयो तुहाया सो अस्मभ्यमधि ब्रवत् ॥ १ ॥

सीसायाध्याह्न दुरुणः सीसायाग्निरुपावति ।

सीसं म इद्रः प्र यच्छत्तदंग यातुचातनम् ॥ २ ॥

इदं विष्कंधं सहत इदं बाधते अत्रिणः ।

अनेन विश्वा ससहे या जातानि पिशाच्याः ॥ ३ ॥

अदि नो गां हंसि यद्यद्वे यदि पूरुषम् ।

तं त्वा सीसेन विध्यामो यथा नोऽसौ अवीरहा ॥ ४ ॥

The modern commentators and interpreters like Pt. Satwalekar read in this the whole story of gun-powder civilization. Whether we accept the whole content and level of the civilization or not, there is no doubt all these words, expressions, prayers, the use of such weapons like Narach, Nalika, Shataghni, etc., described in detail in special books devoted to the art of arms and weapons and the science of war and the calculated and foretold effect of the employment of these weapons of the opposite side, must set a serious question to consider the possibilities of the gun and powder which we suppose to be the invention of the historic times. When one reads these descriptions, one begins to imagine that they are in effect as efficacious as the modern weapons. The Narach, Nalika and Shataghni, are definitely the Bharatiya counterparts of guns and cannons. What Sukra and Vasishtha refer to by Shataghni, is beyond a gun as effective as to destroy hundred people at a time. The only doubt is if these guns and cannons existed in the earlier periods, say of the Vedic age. Shri Ramachandra Dikshitar, an Indologist reputed for his knowledge on this subject writes:—

'It is doubtful whether in earlier times, for instance in the epoch of the epics, it meant a cannon. Possibly it did not. In its literal sense, it meant a machine able to kill a hundred men. It seems to have been a heavy column of stone or timber fixed with iron spikes on the ramparts of fortresses. Kautilya refers to it in this sense only. The ancient fortresses

of Ayodhya and Lanka had these machines provided on their ramparts. There is the authority of the Harivamsh to indicate that there were smaller types of these machines carried in hand. But, these types do not find mention in later military literature; the term used there unmistakably refers to cannon. It can therefore be safely concluded that these weapons, guns, and cannons **were popular** in India at the best from about the commencement of the Christian era.'

In face of such very clear references, we fail to understand why we should not accept the irresistible conclusions of the existence of gun and powder in our ancient life. If there is any reason there is none else except that the modern Bharatiya intellectual who is obsessed with the thought of his inferiority complex in the set-up of the present progressive West demurs to or feels shy of believing that we had in the past what the Westerners boast of today.

From all what we have said in this chapter on the arms and weapons, the one conclusion that can be asserted is that the Vedic nation had progressed and evolved the art of war to a very high scientific level. It was on that account that it became not only invincible but the conquering race which spread its culture and civilization over and through a larger portion of the Eastern hemisphere. These weapons of war, presuppose an organisation of a regular army. What type of army organisation the Vedic people had evolved is not a very much known subject and therefore more interesting to which we will now invite the attention of the readers in the next chapter.

CHAPTER XXIV

ORGANISATION OF THE ARMY IN THE VEDIC TIMES

It is difficult to trace when first a flag was raised on the end of a pole as a symbol. But the device of representing an idea, an ideology, a people, an army or a kingdom by means of a piece of cloth of a particular colour and shape seems to have arisen in very ancient times. A flag had come to be recognised as an eloquent symbol in an idea or a people to whom it belonged in the earliest Rig-Vedic hymns. Gods and men fashioned their flags and carried them in front. An army came to be recognised by its Standard or Flag. It is impossible to imagine a military organisation without its Standard. In fact, the Standard or the Flag is an indispensable symbol of an army and a nation.

The flag has always been held as a symbol demanding supreme regard in the ideology of the Bharatiya people. From the days of Rig-Veda, the one symbol which commanded unsplit loyalty of the people was the flag. It appears, right from the Rig-Vedic days, the tradition of national history, the consciousness of racial glory, and the burning devotion of the people had come to be concentrated in their one symbol, namely, the flag. Instances are available to illustrate how when the question of honour and loyalty to the flag as against the personality of the king arose, the heroic Bharatiyas did not hesitate to sacrifice the heads of kings for the maintenance of the honour of their flag. Poets have glorified the flag as more valuable than the heads of kings. Ancient epic bards have regarded the flag as a standard for comparison of perfection and prowess of their heroes. Valmiki while describing the grand personalities of Rama's brothers as the towers of palaces, compares Rama to a flag fluttering above them. So significant has been the brilliant conception of the Bharatiyas about this object of national honour and pride.

The Rig-Veda contains innumerable references to the flag in different contexts. A number of synonyms of the flag, Arka, Ketu, etc., are found in use in the Rig-Veda.

The 'dhvaj' (flag) used to be carried by the marching soldiers to the battlefield. The flag was considered as the greatest target to be attacked and the object of honour to be defended. It was a common convention that when a flag fell or was carried away, the army was supposed to be defeated. Archers on both sides tried to tear the cloth or break the staff of the flag. To prevent this, soldiers fought at the stakes of their lives, for the fall of the flag was tantamount to a defeat of the army, creating utter confusion in the forces and causing complete surrender. The following verses from the Rig-Veda throw light upon what we have said above:

'Those, whose flags in the battlefield become the targets of enemy's weapons, they offer prayers and fight to the finish. O Indra and Varuna, we pray you to kill our enemy with arms in such a manner that their followers will flee to the directions.' (Rig-Veda 7-85-2).

स्पर्धन्ते वै ऊं (इति) देवद्वृतये अत्र येषु ध्वजेषु दिशवः पतन्ति ।

युवम् तान् इन्द्रावरुणो अमित्रान् हतम् पराचः शर्षा विधूचः ॥

'When it happens that the standards of our armies get mixed up (i.e., surrounded) in the army of the enemy. O Indra, may you be there to protect them. May our heroes turn out excellent; may they bring victory; may the gods be on our side on this occasion.' (Rig-Veda 10-103-11).

अस्माकं इन्द्रः संऽऋतेषु ध्वजेषु अस्माकं याः इषवः ताः जयन्तु ।

अस्माकं वीराः उत्तरे भवन्तु अस्मान् ऊं (इति) देवाः अकतं हवेषु ॥

From the above two references, it will be apparent how imperative it was to protect the flag from molestation or from being carried away by the enemy. In another place, the fire has been described as the standard of shining lustre. The flames of fire have always been compared to the fluttering of a flag, which announced its (fire's) arrival. The flag and the drum (Dundubhi) were two unmistakable symbols of Vedic royalty.

The flags used to bear various fascinating signs and pictures on them. The Atharva-Veda (5-21-12) describes an army possessing the Sun-inscribed flag. Some flags used to have the 'Moon' also on them. In later military history, flags came to be distinguished by their colours, shapes, and the pictures on them. Vishnu is called 'Garud-dhwaj'; Shankar 'Vrishabh-dhwaj'; the God of Love 'Meena-ketan'. The flag was in ancient times considered to be not only a symbol of honour and devotion of the people, but a distinctive emblem of the kingdom. The idea has been common with other ancient nations like Assyrians, Khaldians, Greeks and Romans too. To come to the modern times, the flag has acquired a unique significance in the life of a nation. The flag almost expresses the philosophy which the people follow or the ideals which they hold. Every independent nation today has its own exclusive flag. But, in the olden days, in Bharat, the conditions were somewhat different. There were numerous kings and kingdoms which though they belonged to the same nation, had distinctive flags. Besides the kings, renowned warriors also possessed their personal flags. It seldom happened that a noted warrior had not his identifying flag on his chariot. In the Rig-Veda the chariot of Aswins is described to have thousand flags. The Ramayan mentions 'Kovidar' (golden tree), as the flag of the Solar Dynasty. Coming to the Mahabharat era, we get the descriptions of distinctive flags of the great warriors as follows:—

- (1) Arjuna—Kapidhwaj (with Hanuman inscribed on it).
- (2) Ashwathama—Simha-langala dhvaj (lion and plough).
- (3) Karna—Swarnamaya Hastikaksha (golden elephant).
- (4) Kripa—Vrishabh-dhwaj (bull).
- (5) Vrishasen—Mayur-dhwaj (peacock).
- (6) Jayadrath—Varah-dhwaj (boar).
- (7) Duryodhan—Suvarna naga-dhwaj (golden snake).
- (8) Bhishma—Tal-dhwaj (palm tree).
- (9) Drona—Kamandalu-dhwaj (bowl).
- (10) Bheema—Simha-dhwaj (lion).

Having described the concept, significance and varieties of flags which symbolise the army, we now turn to the system of its organisation in the Vedic age.

In his 'Rig-Veda Darshan' Kolangade writing on the army system of the Vedic period observes: 'It does not appear that in the Rig-Vedic times there was any system of standing army but generally males from all the classes used to receive military training. Possibly in every family there used to be one male member who was equipped with military training. Even the Brahman did not shirk from receiving this training in the use of arms. The names of the great Brahman warriors Parshuram, Drona, Krip, Ashvathama, and others are renowned as great soldiers. It can generally be said that every male member had in him some inherent instinct for war. The kings of course maintained some soldiers for the protection of their palaces and for the defence of their kingdoms. But that was also not as a regular standing army. When a State or a kingdom was attacked, all the people rushed to the battlefield. Having finished the enemy they would break through the military lines as well as the camps and habitations of the enemy and plunder all valuable articles.'

This opinion of Shri Kolangade seems not only fantastic but baseless. Once it is admitted that in the Rig-Vedic age the system of the four-fold classes had come to stay, there is no sense in denying or doubting if there was some type of standing army or not. The Kshatriya class in the social system of the Rig-Vedic Bharat was a special creation to meet the exigencies of the times. This class of warriors was especially created and trained to serve the society as professional soldiers. Their duty and function was to defend the kingdom.

If the Brahman also took to arms, one should not be surprised. It was the Brahman class which was admittedly the teachers' class. The art of war as revealed in the Dhanur-Veda was taught only by the Brahmanas. It was no wonder that the Brahman had therefore to acquire a mastery in the use of arms before he could impart practical training and lessons in it to the Kshatriya class. One other fact mentioned by our law-givers throws revealing light on these Brahman warriors. The law-givers had permitted the Brahman class to take up to any profession of any other lower class if hard times made it difficult for them to carry on their life by practising Brahmanism. The students of social evolution can very well

discover that in the later Vedic society a stage had arrived when it had become necessary for the Brahmans to adopt the profession of the Kshatriyas not only for the sake of their personal maintenance but also for the defence of the social order and the state. The Brahmans had therefore first to learn this art of war and they acquired indeed a commendable mastery in it.

The life of Parashuram is a brilliant illustration of the above fact. This Brahman boy took up the arms for some special reasons under a peculiar situation. But having served the purpose he stuck up to it as history tells us, and was not at all honoured and commended for doing so. Drona, Krip and Ashvathama, great heroes and archers as they were, have never been held in very great esteem as ideal Brahmans in the Mahabharat.

The soldiers' profession which was a function of the Kshatriya class was not possible unless it is presumed that there was some sort of a standing or regular army in a kingdom. The references in the Rig-Veda as well as the Atharva-Veda which specifically indicate the existence of regular forces are not few. How the Kshatriya was trained we have described already. Now if we look to the war songs and the references to the arms and the systematic descriptions of the means of warfare, we shall have to admit that all this could not have been possible in a system which had not a regular army. The grand description of the great Rig-Vedic war fought between Sudas on one side and the ten kings on the other which almost became a land-mark in the Vedic history is a clear proof of the existence of some sort of army organisation in the Vedic age.

The evolution of a systematic science of warfare and the organisation of a trained army is a logical conclusion from all the descriptions which we get in the Rig-Veda. Even Lord Bacon has observed: 'Walled towns, stored arsenals, and armouries, horses of good breed, all this is but a sheep in lion's skin except the breed and disposition of the people to be stout and warlike.' If what Bacon says is true, then it confirms the view that the creation of the professional class of soldiers presupposes the necessity of standing and regular armies

especially in that age of constant warfare for the protection of the changing borders of settlements and kingdoms.

The Bharatiya science of war talks of four branches of the army organisation, namely, the infantry, the chariots, the cavalry and the elephant batteries. This broad or loose classification of the army is further subdivided by the authors on the army organisation. They classified the army in six and more scientifically in eight branches. The Kamandakiya Niti-Shastra describes these six branches as the four above divisions plus a war advisory board and the commissary or the army-stores. The Mahabharat tells of eight sections of the army. Besides these eight, there were some branches which were secret and confidential. The chariots, infantry, the elephant-battery, the cavalry, war-experts and strategists, watch and ward of stores, commissary, and those who looked after the injured soldiers were these eight sections. There was a secret wing of spies and intelligence men who worked behind the curtains. From all these minute analysis and descriptions of the needs of armies to which our ancient thinkers had given a systematic thought, it becomes obvious that they left nothing to chance in the organisation of the army for the achievement of victory.

Shri Vimalkant Majumdar and Dr. P. C. Chakravarty opine that in the Vedic times the army contained only the chariot and the foot-soldiers. In their view there was no infantry or the elephant-batteries. Contrary to this opinion, Prof. Ramachandra Dikshitar maintains that there was the existence of elephant batteries in the Vedic armies. According to Dikshitar, there was however no cavalry. Dr. Avinash Chandra Das on the other hand feels that the infantry had come to be a regular wing of the Bharatiya army. This divergence of opinions in regard to the different sections of the army organisation rather than proving what they advocate, suggests some quite a different conclusion, namely, that it is not possible to arrive at any final decision about the conditions in the Vedic times simply from the texts as they are. The one great argument that is the absence of explicit evidence, on which these research scholars depend for their contradictory views does not prove their theories. On the strength of what we gather from that wide province over which according to us the Vedic literature

extends, it is possible for us to throw a clear light upon these different eight sections of the army organisation of the Vedic people. Let us examine the first branch of the chariot and the charioteers.

The chariot and the charioteers are sure to attract the attention of any casual student of Vedic literature. The references to and detailed descriptions of the wonderful chariots and their masters are too numerous for us to cite here. We give below only one verse from Rig-Veda which describes the Vedic chariot in full.

The poet observes:—

‘O, you seasoned wood, you are very strong and tough, be you our saviour and strong soldier; you are joined together by fine bull-leather-straps and cords, may you therefore remain strong without giving way. May the hero who rides in you be victorious on the battlefield. May the earth and heaven make you strong; you have inherited toughness of the old tree; you have received the ‘Ojas’—energy, splendour and freshness of water; the leather-belt has given you a tightness; let the Vajra of Indra and the chariot (of this wood) therefore be worshipped.’ (Rig-Veda 6-47-26-27).

वनस्पते वीळुऽअङ्गः हि भूयाः अस्मत्सखा प्रऽतरणः सुऽवीरः ।

गोभिः सन्नद्धः आसिवीळ्यस्व आऽस्थाता ते जयतु जेत्वानि ॥ २६ ॥

दिवः पृथिव्याः परि ओजः उन्ऽभृतम् वनस्पतिऽभ्यः परि आऽभृतम् सहः ।

अयम् ओजमानम् परि गोभिः आऽवृतम् इन्द्रस्य वज्रम्हविषा रथम् यज ॥ २७ ॥

In the next verse the same poet sings further:

‘O you chariot, you are the seat of Indra’s Vajra, you are the carrier of the army of Maruts, you are the centre of the brilliance of the Sun, and you are the very heart of Varuna. May you accept this our offering and respond to our invocation.’ (Rig-Veda 6-47-28).

इन्द्रस्य वज्रः महतां अनीकं मित्रस्य गर्भः वरुणस्य नाभिः ।

स इमाम् नः हव्यऽदातिम् जुषाणः देव रथ प्रति हव्या गृभाय ॥ २८ ॥

This verse has been literally quoted in the Atharva-Veda also. It will be observed that a chariot formed an indispensable part as the chief means of transport in the army

organisation. The hero went to the battlefield in a chariot and his success depended upon the skill of the charioteer. The Aitareya and Taittiriya Brahmins give eloquent descriptions of the war-chariot as well as the skilful charioteers. These poets go very much into the details of the parts, axles, rims, etc., of the chariot. The Brahmins even refer to the carpenters who manufactured the chariots. It is one indication that by the time of the Brahman period a class of chariot-manufacturers had come to stay as the war-chariots were indeed in great demand in those days.

Coming to the chariot itself we find specific names for different parts as well as the places where the flag was hoisted and the warrior took his seat. There is a description that on the two sides of the warrior his aids-in-camp took their positions.

—(Atharva-Veda 8-8-23).

“संवत्सरो रथः परिवत्सरो रथोपस्थो विराढीषाग्नी रथमुखम् ।

इन्द्रः सव्यं ह्यध्वन्द्रमाः सारथिः ॥”

Shri Krishna and Arjuna, were considered to be arch chariot-drivers also. Besides these the names of Matali, Brahmadeo, Shalva, are mentioned as very expert charioteers. The Brahmadev is reported to have the chariot of Mahadev in his fight with Tripurasur. Since that time Brahmadev became a standard of comparison as an Arch Charioteer. Matali was the chariot-driver of Mahendra, the Lord of Gods. In the epic fight between Rama and Ravana, Matali was deputed to help Rama. What part Lord Shri Krishna performed in the Mahabharat war as a great chariot-driver is very well-known. In the most decisive duel between Arjuna and Karna, Karna had to invite Shalya to drive his chariot in the battle-field. Shalya was known to be not on good terms with Karna. With full knowledge that Shalya might discourage him, Karna requested him to pilot his chariot for his adversary Arjuna had Shri Krishna as his chariot-driver. The art of driving a chariot had been of very high mark in Bharat as it was in Greece later on. The Mahabharat has given a very useful description of the qualities and capacities necessary for a skilful driver.

The charioteer was expected to know very many things, namely, the season of the year and the country, the science of weather forecasts, the actions of the enemy, the attitudes of the hero and the horses, endurance and enthusiasm of the hero, the comparative strengths and weaknesses of the duel fighters, terrain of the battlefield, the hard and loose texture of the ground, the actual time of the fight, correct judgment when to attack, when to turn back, when to stand still and when to bend down or jump up. All these are the different functions which a charioteer was expected to perform in the split seconds of the action on the field. He was considered to be the real director of the chariot with the warrior in it, as if it were a family.

The above discussion is convincing enough to impress one fact that the importance of the charioteers as a class cannot be under-rated. It will be remembered that the Bharatiya social system had created a sub-class which was devoted to this profession of chariot-driving. This class of chariot-drivers was labelled as 'Soota' which was, of course, different from the other 'Soota' mentioned in the legendary literature as the custodians of the royal records or archives.

The 'Soota' community which came to claim the profession of chariot-driving was the progeny of Kshatriya from Brahman females. This occupation of life though low apparently was considered to be of so very great consequence in the determination of fates of the fighting warriors that even supermen like Shri Krishna and Arjuna did not consider it mean to learn the art. If the chariot-driver had normally to receive his orders and to abide by the directions of the warrior it was also his responsibility to save him from unexpected attacks, and do many things at times even against the master's wishes. It was the responsibility of the chariot-driver to give proper advice to the warrior and on some occasions to take him away out of the field to save him. Hopkins describes the skill of the chariot-driver in the following words:

'His true art consisted in wheeling and turning, in bringing the car rapidly about so as to attack the antagonist with such speed from all quarters that the chariot seemed to advance from all sides at once. The names of the circles are apparently

technical. The effect of circling was produced by goading the steeds and hauling on the reins.'

The art of chariot-driving had reached a very high stage of development in the Vedic days. The Mahabharat tells us how in the battle with Shalvaraj, Pradyumna the son of Shrikrishna was injured in the thick of the fight when his charioteer removed him to safety very skilfully. In the other famous fight between Abhimanyu and the Kauravas when the boy-hero was wanting to break into the Chakravyuha, his charioteer had informed him fully of the danger in doing so and persuaded him not to undertake that great risk. One more convincing illustration of how consequential was the art of chariot-driving is provided by an event in the Mahabharat war. Karna had released the 'Snake' missile, 'Nagastra', which would have taken the life of Ariuna. Shrikrishna who was driving Ariuna's chariot recognised that fatal missile and so managed to bend his horses on their knees that the missile only touched off the crown of Arjuna and the hero was saved.

From the days of the Rig-Veda right up to the Maurva times, the chariot was an important wing of the army organisation of Bharatiyas. Kautilya has given a full chapter with the caption 'Rathadhyaksha', 'Superintendent of Chariots. He enumerates in detail the functions and responsibilities of the Superintendent of Chariots. The Superintendent had to arrange for the training of charioteers; he had to maintain all the chariots in fit and riding conditions and thirdly he had to arrange the funds and keep accounts for the expenses in the manufacture and maintenance of the chariots. Kautilva gives some more details of the manufacture of chariots. A chariot generally was about 10 measures in height and in between six to twelve in length. The chariots were classified in six kinds out of which the first three were for use in warfare. A special type of chariot was in use for the training of charioteers. For the pursuit of a fleeing enemy, a special type of chariot seems to have been in vogue. The chariots generally were two-wheeled, but the four and eight-wheeled chariots were also not uncommon. Every chariot had between 10 to 12 attendants, the maximum being 50. The chariot wing of the army was very effective in halting the march of the enemy, in captur-

ing the strong points of the adversary, in manoeuvring dispersed and scattered troops in some regular formation and lastly in shattering the enemy concentration with its forcible drive. Megasthenes describes the Mauryan chariots as follows:—

'The chariots are drawn on the march by oxen but the horses are led along by halter, that their legs may not be galled and inflamed, nor their spirits damped by drawing the chariots. In addition to the charioteers, there are two fighting men who sit in the chariot beside him.'

This is a description by an objective eye-witness of the Mauryan condition. The chariots were drawn by bullocks. But when the occasion required, horses were generally voked. In the actual battle it was the horse-chariot that was mostly in use.

The old literature contains descriptions of all these different types of chariots as also the material with which they were manufactured. Being the most convenient means of transport they carried all defensive and offensive weapons and especially quiver-loads of arrows. The flag of the warrior decorated the chariot which also carried an umbrella. A regiment or an army is called 'Dhwajini'—implying that without a flag or a standard, no army could be recognised.

Though the importance of chariots as a wing of the Bharatiya army cannot be under-estimated, it had its own drawbacks. If the battlefield was muddy on account of rains or flood-waters, then chariots turned useless; the wheels could not move and the hero had to abandon his chariot. It is very curious and amusing that by mutual agreement the Bharatava used to decide the day of commencement of action according to the suitability of seasons. Shri Krishna informed Duryodhana that the time of the year was favourable for the start of the epic war as the rains had ended and the battlefields were dry and smooth and very convenient for the chariots to move along. An uneven battle-ground was disastrous for the charioteer. The readers who are conversant with the Mahabharat war know what a great predicament Karna was put into on account of a wheel of his chariot having been swallowed by a crevice in the bosom of the mother earth. Apart from the hand of fate in this disastrous episode, the simple fact

stands that when he was preoccupied in getting over the mishap of the wheel the invincible warrior, Karna was shot by the arrow of Arjuna.

This important wing of the Hindu army came to an end by about the 7th century. Harshavardhana, the last great emperor in the Vedic tradition fought a decisive and eventful action on the battlefield of Thaneshwar. There is no mention of chariots in the army of Harsha. Pulkeshin II who defeated Harshavardhan had a great army. Huan Tsang who was in Bharat at this time describes the conditions in detail. He does not seem to have noticed chariots in the Bharatiya armies as Megasthenes did in the 3rd century B.C. After Harsha and Pulkeshi, we do not come across with chariots as a part of the army organisation or the chariot-warfare.

Let us next turn to the other aspects of the army organisation of the Vedic period.

CHAPTER XXV

ARMY AND ITS DIVISIONS IN THE VEDIC TIMES

THE next significant wing of the Bharatiya army was the elephant-battery. The elephant is seen in Bharatiya life from almost the beginning of literary records. Not only as a sign of pomp and prosperity but also as a very powerful force in the fight with an enemy, the elephant seemed to have been largely used. As a measure of prosperity, the word 'Gajanta Lakshmi' has become proverbial in Sanskrit literature. It has to be seen whether elephants were ever employed in war manoeuvres by the Vedic people. Shri Vimalakant Majumdar, Dr. P. C. Chakravarty and Dr. Avinash Chander Das, all hold the opinion that the elephants were not used on battlefields in the Rig-Vedic age. Contrary to their opinion, we have sufficient references from which the conclusion of the use of elephants in battles can be conveniently drawn. In Rig-Veda (10-106-6) we get a mention of the 'Ankush', the goad, with which an elephant is controlled.

“सृण्याऽइव जर्मरी (इति) तुफरीतू (इति) नैतोशाऽइव तुफरी (इति) पर्फरीका ।
उदन्यजाऽइव जेमना मदेरू (इति) ता मे जरायु अजरम् मरायु ॥ ६ ॥

The word 'Ankush', goad to control an elephant must have occurred to the poet who had seen how the animal turned mad in a fight. There is no doubt that the hymn in which this reference occurs is one of the very difficult ones to understand. From Acharya Sayan down to the modern interpreters, nobody has been able to explain this reference satisfactorily. Western scholars interpret the words to mean the temples of two fighting elephants. Prof. Ramchandra Dikshitar has to confess, 'this is a fairly early reference to the animal being used in war'. This reference, however, determines two facts beyond dispute, namely, that elephants opposed each other in a fight and were controlled by a goad.

It can safely be affirmed that elephants were used as means of transport and communications. In the later books of

the Vedas, we get explicit references to show that elephants were trained for warfare. Still later on in the Arthashastra, Kautilya talks of a department of war-organisation under the Elephant Superintendent. Kautilya instructs that the Superintendent of the elephant-battery must look to the proper nourishment as well as to their other needs; he had to take care of the elephants and the forests in which they were bred; he had to keep proper accounts of expenses on elephants and maintain a good staff of elephant-conductors and attendants; he had also to arrange for the timely hospitalisation of the sick and mad elephants; he had to pay rewards to the officers and attendants adequately according to their qualifications; and lastly he had to see that the elephants were given their regular morning and afternoon baths, exercises and feeding.

The direction that the elephants were to be taken out for their regular exercises in the evening and given regular baths evinces a thorough acquaintance with the fine and exclusively aristocratic inclinations and habits of the animal which must surely have required a long period of centuries to acquire.

Seven types of practical lessons in the intensive training were commended for elephants that had to be used on the battle-fields:

- (1) *Upasthan*—to train the elephant to jump high up to the mark or to cross over it;
- (2) *Samavartan*—to bridge a ditch;
- (3) *Samyan*—to march straight and fast;
- (4) *Vadhavadh*—was a lesson to teach the elephant to trample upon the soldiers and horsemen to crush them;
- (5) *Hastiyudh*—to fight duels with the opposing animals of the enemy;
- (6) *Nagaryan*—to march on and assail enemy's encampments, fortifications and forts; and
- (7) *Sangramika*—which was indeed the limit of the sagacity and usefulness to which this giant animal could be tamed and trained to serve the war purposes. By this an elephant was trained to carry a strong lethal weapon or a long broad sword in its trunk

and break through the enemy forces creating a confusion, chaos and devastation all around.

These seven lessons in the training of elephants were surely not meant for the exhibition of regal prosperity or entertainment. Elephants formed a powerful wing of the Bharatiya armies. The animals used to be decorated and adorned in choice styles. Silk garments, with silver and golden ornaments were very common caparisons of an elephant. In fitness and proportion of the prosperity and wealth of the masters and kings, silver or golden seats were decked on the backs of the elephants. On the crests of these canopied seats mounted on the backs of caparisoned elephants fluttered the flags of the masters. In later periods—right up to the Peshwas' days—elephants were mainly used as the standard-bearers.

Megasthenes has described how the elephants were tamed in Bharat. He also gives more realistic information of the various treatments meted out to the sick and mad elephants. War-elephants used to carry generally one driver and three archers. These war-elephants have been described by Plutarch. Alexander, the World Conqueror, met Porus, the Bharatiya king on the battlefield of Takshila. Plutarch, the camp-reporter of the Greeks, describes the elephants of King Porus in the following words:

'His elephant, waxing furious, though not yet wounded, kept changing the ranks of the enemies until the driver, perceiving the king's condition turned the beast round and fled. The Indian driver, thinking the king wished to alight, made the elephant kneel down in the usual manner. Alexander, supposing that he was dead, ordered his body to be stripped—when the elephant turned upon them in defence of his master and lifting him up and placed him once more at its back.' (*Maccrindal-Invasion of Alexander*, p. 212). It will be worthwhile to note here how mighty forces of the enemy were afraid of the attack of Bharatiya elephants. Alexander has been reported to have observed: 'It is the elephant only which makes it impossible for the horses to land on the other bank.'

In ancient warfare the elephant-battery formed the vanguard of the marching armies. They cleared the shrubs and trees on the path for the foot soldiers to follow. They

gave good cover to the right and left wings of the marching forces. When some river or high unsurmountable impediment came on the way the elephants were the best transport for the army. In the thick of the battle-field, the elephant-battery was considered to be generally impenetrable and when the attack started it was the elephant spear-heads that could lick the enemy and put it to flight. Before a mad elephant no one could dare stand. When these furious beasts created confusion in the enemy's ranks, the warriors who followed made a successful finish of the battle.

Elephants were used for creating breaches in the walls and rampars of enemy's camps and castles. The greatest virtue of the elephant was that as long as the animal was in sober mood he would never turn away from the battlefield. The difficulty came only when the animal turned mad and furious. The Dhanur-Veda has commended the elephant forces to be the best in the army and has taken pains to teach how to select virtuous animals, how to classify them, and how to train them for service in peace and war. In the Bharatiya literature, there are volumes on the subjects of taming, selection, training, etc., of elephants.

The third branch of the army organisation was the cavalry. We have a full valuable record of the cavalry as constituted in the Bharatiya army from the report of Megasthenes as well as the chapters in Kautilya's Arthashastra. Like the elephants, Kautilya considered the horses to be the wealth of the army. He has given a whole chapter to the subject of horses in that wonderful volume of Arthashastra.

Much like the Superintendent of the elephant-battery, the Superintendent of Horse had to perform varied functions in the bringing up and maintenance of the stable horses. Kautilya tells us that horses were stamped on their backs or foreheads, whether they were brought or received as gifts, whether they were captured or born and bred in the stables. Megasthenes has described in detail the equestrian section of the army. He informs us that the officers of these stables enquired and kept full records of the details of the age, pedigree, form and size and all such relevant things when they purchased or procured horses. The Mahabharat refers

to the horses yoked to the chariot of Abhimanyu when he rushed into the circle formation of the Kaurava forces. Abhimanyu's chariot had very brave horses though they were only of three years' age. Another early European author on India, by name Arrian, describes the war-horses of Bharatiyas as follows:

'The horsemen are equipped with two lances like the lances called Saunia and with a shorter buckle than that carried by the foot-soldiers; but they do not put saddles on their horses nor do they curb them with bits like the bits in use among the Greeks or the Kelts, but they put on round the extremity of the horse's mouth a circular piece of stitched raw ox-hide studded with pricks of iron or brass pointing inwards but very sharp. There are also ivory-pricks. The reins are connected with iron prongs in their mouths. It is practically this prong that keeps the animal in check. To this prong are connected the pricks which have their own share in controlling these animals.'

The art of horse-breeding had been developed to perfection in ancient Bharat. This art was first propounded by a Rishi called Shalihotra for which reason the art came to be known as 'Shalihotram'. There are two other reputed authors of this trade and technique. One Jaidev has been credited with a volume renowned as 'Ashva-Ayurveda'. Nakul, the fourth Pandava who was a reputed authority on everything about horses in his times has to his credit a treatise known as 'Ashva-Shashtra' the 'science of horse'. Unfortunately, nothing more beyond these names of the authors and their works is known today.

It will be recalled that when the Pandavas had to pass their one year of concealment, Nakul resorted to the household of King Virat as the equerry of the royal stables. There is one another volume to the credit of Nakul by name 'Ashva-Chikitsa' which deals with all matters concerned with horses. King Nala was also famous as a master in the equestrian science. This king Nala taught the secret of his trade and art to King Rutuparna of Ayodhya and learnt from him the secret of the game of dice. A very interesting anecdote is told in the Mahabharat about the mastery of King Nala in

the 'science of horses'. It is well-known that Nala had been lost into the forest. His wife Damayanti wanted to recover her husband. Knowing that Nala was a great master of the equestrian science, she enacted a device to attract him home. She announced her desire for re-marriage and invited kings for the choice of her hand. Nala was serving as an equerry in the household of King Rutuparna of Ayodhya. Rutuparna called Nala and told him that he desired to reach the kingdom of Vidarbha in time for the 'Swayamvara', the self-selection of the bride-groom by the bride. King Nala who was living incognito under the name of Bahuka, went to the horse-stables and selected a pair of horses for the miracle of that long journey. Mahabharat describes how Bahuka selected his horses. He picked out very thin animals but who were strong and enduring. The horses which he brought were of very good pedigree and tried performance. They had no vices or bad habits. Their lower lips were broader. The horses came from the land of Sindhu and bore ten circles on their foreheads. When the king saw these horses selected by his charioteer, he became first doubtful and then angry with him. In reply Bahuka convinced the king how his selection was correct according to the rules and precepts of the 'Ashva-Vidya'. Bahuka assured the king that the horses would take him right in time to the place; and it did happen as he had promised.

(Mahabharat-Wanaparv 71: 11-16).

ततः परीक्षामश्वानां चक्रे राजन्स बाहुकः ।

अश्वशालामुपागम्य भाङ्गासूरिनुवाज्ञया ॥ ११ ॥

स त्वर्यमाणो बहुशः ऋतुपर्णेन बाहुकः ।

अश्वजिज्ञासमानो वै विचार्य च पुनः पुनः ।

अध्यगच्छत्कृशानश्वान् समर्थानध्वनि क्षमान् ॥ १२ ॥

तेजोबलसमायुक्तान्कुलशीलसमन्वितान् ।

वर्जितान् लक्षणैर्हीनैः पृथुप्रोथान्महाहनून् ॥ १३ ॥

शुद्धान्दशभिरावर्तैः सिंधुजान्वातरंहसः ।

दृष्ट्वा तानब्रवीद्राजा किञ्चित्कोपसमन्वितः ॥ १४ ॥

किमिदं प्रार्थितं कर्तुं प्रलब्धव्या न ते वयम् ।

कथमल्लबलप्राणा वक्ष्यन्तीमे ह्या मम ॥ १५ ॥

बाहुक उवाचः—एगो ललाटे द्वे मूर्ध्नि द्वौ द्वौ पार्श्वोपार्श्वयोः ।

द्वौ द्वौ वक्षसि विज्ञेयौ प्रयागे चैक एव तु ॥ १६ ॥

एते ह्या गमिष्यन्ति विदर्भान्नात्र संशयः ॥

All the scrupulous details and descriptions of the kinds and characters of horses indicate that the Bharatiyas had studied the subject of horses thoroughly.

From the earliest times, horses from different countries were known by their country-names in Sanskrit language. If we review the names of horses, which have crept in the language since the Vedic age right up to the Mahabharat times, we get almost all the names of the countries known for good horses in the Western Asia. Horses from Sindhu Desh were called 'Saindhav', from Balhik-Baeteria as Balhak; from Cambodia as Kamboja, from Turkasthan—modern Turkey as Turag, from Arabsthan—Arabia as Arvan, from Parsika—modern Persia as Parsika, from Tajkisthan as Tajak, from Khorasan as Khurshal and Tushar, etc. These different kinds of horses enumerated according to the countries of their breed have been classified according to their merits by the two authorities, Shalihotra and Nakul. Of the various kinds, those from Sindhu, Kamboj, and Balhik were considered to be of the best breed but Shalihotra mentions that the horses—Tajik, Khurshal and Tushar coming from Tajikisthan and Khurasan were the finest.

The horse rider used a whip, and when he took the horse to the battlefield the whip was tied to his wrist to enable him to use both the hands for his bow and arrows. The Sanskrit language contains almost all the words to denote the different organs of the horse, their habits, their equipment, etc. It was a practice in those days to give some intoxicants to horses before they were taken to the battlefields. Prof. Dikshitar, however, opines that the horse-section or the cavalry did not form any part in the Vedic army. He observes: 'Though we have references to horses and war-chariots drawn by horses, we have no indication that a cavalry as a disciplined force existed in the days of the Rig-Veda.' It is unfortunate that Prof. Dikshitar who has otherwise arrived at right conclusions

about so many things in the Vedic army, has not been able to notice evidence for the existence of cavalry in the Vedic organisation of an army. This defect is due to, according to us, in that basic misconception that the Veda means only the Rig-Veda. If Prof. Dikshitar had not fallen a victim to this wrong notion, then he could not have missed so many references to the horses and the cavalry in the Vedic literature. In the Atharva-Veda the mention of the clouds of dust raised by the horses' hoofs is very prominent to escape notice. The word 'Ashvapāl' and 'Ashvapati' do not necessarily mean that the king had only a single horse or a few of them. The word 'Ashvapati' presupposes a distinction in cavalry for which the king became renounced, in the land. It is sad how these great scholars ignored the references to the horse-races which are a necessary part in the Raja-Suya and the Vajpeya sacrifices. If the word 'Jarfari', 'Turfari' lead us to believe in the existence of elephants in the Vedic times, it is difficult to understand why we should not infer the existence of cavalries from so many direct references to the horses, to the science of horses, and the organisation of training horses for battles. We quote below some pertinent references to horses which help us to arrive at definite conclusions on the question.

The poet observes:

'O, Indra, by your grace Prastok has given ten chests of wealth and ten horse-riders. He has given ten horses and ten chariots with pairs of horses.' (Rig-Veda 6-47-22-23).

प्रस्तोकः इत् नु राधसः ते इन्द्र दशकोशयीः दश वाजिनः भदात् ॥ २२ ॥

दश अश्वान् दशकोशान् ॥ २३ ॥

In this place it will be remembered that the word Vajin means a horse with the rider on it. The word 'Vajin' in the above verse has to be interpreted in the sense of horses with riders as the reputed Vedic scholar Patvardhan has done it.

In another place the poet says: 'O Brihaspati, may you inspire our warriors to march on the enemy as the horses are goaded to rush into the battlefield.' (Rig-Veda 10-68-2).

“ जनेमित्रः न दंष्टरी अनक्ति बृहस्पते वाजय आशून् इव आजौ ॥ २ ॥ ”

The horses which were goaded to run into the battlefield must be imagined to belong to a troop of war-horsemen.

In yet another place in the same Mandal, the poet fancies:

'Just as a black horse is adorned with a string of white pearls, so has this dark sky been studded with shining stars by manes.' (Rig-Veda 10-68-11).

“अभि श्यावं न कुशनेभिः अश्वं नक्षत्रेभिः पितरः द्यां अपि शन् ॥ ११ ॥”

This too poetic a description of the horses must make us believe how intimately the Vedic ancestors were acquainted with the horses, how much they loved this pet animal and how preciouslv they adorned him even with strings of pearls. Another poet prays Lord Mahendra: 'O Lord, may you fill the minds of our soldiers with the spirit to fight the battle. O, you wielder of Vajra, may you inspire our horse-riders also for the battle; and may the rattling sound of wheels of our chariots turn out to be the sound of our victory in the battle-field.' (Rig-Veda 10-103-10).

उत् हर्षय मघऽवन् आयुधानि उत् सत्स्वनां मामकानां मनांसि ।

उत् वृत्रऽइन् वाजिनानां वाजिनानि उत् रथानां जयतां धन्तु घोषाः ॥ १०

This verse expressly mentions the horse-rider and the chariot in connection with the battle-field. That there was a cavalry whatever may be its magnitude as an important wing of the Vedic army is beyond all doubts.

The fourth division of the Vedic army was the infantry, which was called Patti or Padati. The Agni Puran mentions this as a very solid section of the army in the following words:

'The army which has a very large infantry destined to be victorious against any enemy.'

सेनापदातिबहुलाशत्रूजयति सर्वदा ।

Kautilva has given a serious thought to the infantry as an independent section, in a separate chapter which is talking about the army organisation. Another famous work on statecraft and diplomacy of kings mentions infantry as an essential part and enumerates its functions as follows:

(1) The infantry had to put up and arrange the military camps.

(2) The infantry had to keep a watch on all the camp workers and soldiers in the military base.

(3) The treasury, the armoury, the stocks of food and other war-material had to be well protected and preserved.

(4) It was a very vital function of the infantry to look to the hygienic cleanliness of water.

(5) The infantry units had to keep the routes of attacks and retreat in order.

(6) When the deployment or manoeuvres for action had to be planned, the infantry units were the main guides and guardians of the army as a whole.

(Neetiprakashika 6-66-67)

शोधनं कृत्तीर्थानां मार्गाणां शिबिरस्य च ।

स्कंधावारस्य करणं विष्टिकर्मप्रमाधनम् ॥

कोशागारायुधागारधान्यागारादिरक्षणम् ।

व्यूहप्रकारकरणं पत्तिकर्म प्रचक्षते ॥

The Shukraniti informs us that a good infantry can be so employed as to create fright in the enemies' forces. Arrian, the author of Indica, while writing about the Bharatiya infantry, observes:

'They carried a bow made of equal length with the man who bears it. This they rest upon the ground and pressing with their left foot, thus discharge the arrow having drawn the string backwards; for the shaft they use is little short of being three yards long, and there is nothing which can resist an Indian archer's shot neither shield nor breast-plate, nor any stronger defence if such there be. In their left hand they carry bucklers made of undressed ox-hide which are not so broad as those who carry them but are about as long.'

Same units of the infantry used to be armed with short-swords. The more common and convenient weapon was a broad sword about three measures (i.e., about 54 inches) long. This was the necessary arm for every foot soldier. The Atharva-Veda describes how a foot-soldier was equipped and how protecting charms were sung at the time of his departure to the battle-field. The verse says: 'I will protect your weak points with this shield; let the King Soma cover you with

immortality. May Lord Varuna secure for you a very high place by bringing victory to you in the battle-field.'

(Atharva-Veda 7-118-1)

मर्माणि ते वर्मणा ह्यादयामि सोमस्त्वा राजा मृतेनानु वस्ताम् ।

उरोर्वरीयो वरुणस्ते कृणोतु जयन्ते त्वानु देवा मदन्तु ॥

In the Rig-Veda the infantry is referred to by the term 'Patti'. Very big armies are mentioned in a number of places. One outstanding reference is to the destruction of an army of 60,000 in a single action. The poet recounts:

'When the combination of the twenty kings saw that the King Sushravas was deserted, without any one to help him, they fell upon him on all sides. On that occasion, O Lord, you went to the rescue and defence of Sushravas with your chariot wheel. You destroyed the twenty kings and all their 60,099 soldiers in one single action.'

(Rig-Veda 1-53-9)

त्वम् एतान् जन राज्ञो द्विदश अबंधुना सुश्रवसो पञ्चमुषः ।

बाष्ठी महत्त्रा नवति नव श्रुतो नि चक्रेण रथ्या दुष्पदाऽवृणक् ॥ ९ ॥

The epic war between the ten kings on one side and the Bharatiya monarch Sudas on the other, is a very revealing instance of the mark of a disciplined army in ancient times.

Having thus broadly considered the four wings of the army organisation of Vedic people, we shall now review its minor sections. The first that comes to the mind in its vital importance is the army stores department. The people who managed this supply of provisions were called 'Vishti'. What we in modern times call the Commissariat was known to the Vedic military organisation. It was the function of this Vishti, the ancient Commissariat to look to the uninterrupted supply of all the military provisions in the event of war. When the armies of Kauravas and Pandavas went to the battlefield of Kurukshetra, detailed descriptions of their arrangements and equipments have been given in the Mahabharat: 'There were bullock carts, goods-carriers and weapon-carriers. The treasury, machines, medicines, doctors and attendants formed the military equipment and personnel. The camp also contained

a large number of so-to-say non-combatant camp followers besides the regular servants and attendants. The marching armies contained hundreds of artisans and architects who were on the pay roll of the contending armies.

शकटापणवेशाश्च यानयुग्मं च सर्वशः ।

कोशं यन्त्रायुधं चैव ये च वैद्याश्चित्सकाः ॥

पाण्डु यच्च बलं किञ्चित् यच्चपि कुशदुर्बलम् ।

तत्संगृह्य ययौ राजा ये चापि परिचारकाः ॥

तत्रासन्शिल्पिनः प्राज्ञाः शतशो दत्तवेतनाः ।

सर्वोपकरणैर्युक्ता वैद्या शास्त्रविशारदाः ॥

ज्या धनुर्वर्मशास्त्राणां तथैव मधुसर्पिषोः ।

रसर्जरसपांसूनां राशयः पर्वतोपमाः ॥

बह्वदकं सुयवसं तुषाङ्गारसमन्वितम् ।

शिविरे शिविरे राजा सम्भकार युधिष्ठिरः ॥

It is interesting to note that as old as the Mahabharat age the army had, 'a full equipment of medicines and expert medical attendants. Heaps of bows and arrows, of shields and helmets were also seen there. The camps had adequate supplies of drinking water as well as corns and grains, coals and fuels. The army stores contained honey, ghee and powdered lac.' And all this was well stocked by Yudhishtir in each and individual camp.

In the following chapter the military camp of Duryodhan has been described. We are told that 'a large provision of poisonous arrows and weapons were stored in his armoury.'

The Commissariat had to look to the ready provision of all things necessary on the battlefield as well as in the military bases at the rear. The wounded and sick had to be removed from the thick of the battle and to be treated promptly. There seemed to be an up-to-date arrangement for such attendants and medical aids. It will be noted that when the Grand Bhishma fell down, it was suggested to him, that he could take the medical aid and become safe and be saved from death. But the Grand old man had decided to die rather than prolong his already too long a life, for which reason he refused this medical help.

It may surprise the readers to know that not only the wounded soldiers, but the animals useful in the battlefield were also equally taken care of. Horses and elephants, bullocks and mules were treated medically. In short, the Commissariat Division of the ancient army system was more comprehensive and efficient in those days than could be easily imagined. Megasthenes has recorded that this 'Vishti' or the 'Commissariat' in the Mauryan army was a perfect organisation. Kautilya talks of this Division under the topic of the 'movement of the armies'.

चिकित्सकाः, शस्त्रयन्त्रागदस्त्रेह्वन्नहस्ताः स्त्रियश्च अन्नपानरक्षिण्यः पुरुषाणामुद्धर्णायाः पृष्ठतः तिष्ठेयुः ॥

He lays down: 'Medical men, weapons, medicines, herbs, oils, cloth, all these and the men who looked after them, as also the female officers who managed the masses should follow the marching army.' The Niti-Prakashika recommends that 'the Division should contain some urban people, some provision men, some umbrella-men, some civilian officers, workers, artisans, and architects, sappers and miners, survivors of land and all such types of people, who are essential and useful in any eventuality on the battlefield.' Hunters were considered a necessary unit in the personnel of an army organisation.

Thus it became obvious that this Commissariat Division which is almost the backbone of fighting forces had received serious and thorough attention in the organisation of ancient armies. The very fact that the Vedic and the post-Vedic people had devised a full-fledged Commissariat as a special Division in the army organisation is a proof of their ingenuity and the evolution of the science of war and the system of army organisation. Especially in times and on occasions when the guerilla warfare became a feature, the Commissariat received much more attention. The destruction of this division of army immediately brought about a disaster. For that reason it was always necessary to provide for efficient and quick disposition of this very heavy and unmanageable wing of the army. Ancient organising brains had considered all these virtues and drawbacks of the Commissariat system and tried to make it as serviceable as possible.

If any evidence is wanted in proof of the existence of such a Commissariat Division, we cite a famous legend from Rig-Veda as below: 'Vishpala, the queen of King Khela was a renowned scholar and a reputed warrior. Once while assisting her husband on the battlefield, she was wounded in action. The enemy had severed her leg in a close fight. Distressed on account of this sudden mishap, she invoked the help of the Divine Ashvins. Ashvins operated upon her leg and gave her an artificial iron substitute. The operation and replacement of this limb was so perfect that Vishpala could go to the battlefield the very next day. She fought bravely and vanquished her opponents. This her brave deed and that amazing feat of the divine doctors Ashvins have been very much applauded and sung in the Rig-Veda. The poet sings: "The leg of Vishpala was cut off by the enemy in the thick of the battlefield like the plucking of a wing of a bird. But you, O Ashvins, gave her an artificial leg of iron to enable her to go to the battlefield and defeat her enemies".'

(Rig-Veda 1-16-56)

चरित्रं हि वेरिवाच्छेदि पर्णमाजा खेलम्य परितक्मयायाम् ।

सद्यो जङ्घमायमीं विश्पलाय धने हिते सन्नेवे प्रत्यधत्तम् ॥

There is another reference to this very legend in which the Vedic poet also mentions that this rich queen born in the family of Atharvan was enabled to fight against thousands of adversaries by the grace of Ashvins. It was by this favour that she could help the dynasty of 'Ashva-kula' to survive.

(Rig-Veda 1-112-10).

याभिर्विश्पलां धनमाम् अथर्व्यम् महत्समीकृष्टे आजौ अजिन्वतम् ।

याभिर्विशम् अथर्व्यं प्रेणिम आदत्तम् तामिहृषु ऊतिभिरश्विना गतम् ॥

From these descriptions it is apparent that in the Vedic times the surgical and medical science also had been evolved to a very surprising stage by the Bharatava people. This also confirms how the Bharatava designers of army system had made provision for prompt attention on the injured and the dying. If we do not discard this account as merely a fantastic imagination, then the very idea that an artificial leg of iron could be given to a wounded soldier speaks a volume of the culture

and civilisation and the state of scientific progress as great as that of our modern times.

Let us now look to the naval units and the Vedic Forts. There are volumes in the war-literature of the Bharatiya people on the art of navigation and sea-faring. Dr. A. V. Smith in his history writes about the Bharatiya navy as follows:—

‘The creation of the Admiralty Department was an innovation due to the genius of Chandragupta.’

In our view this opinion of Dr. Smith has to be corrected in that, according to us, the science and the art of navigation was known to the Bharatīvas right from the Vedic times. We shall cite a number of instances and legends in which the voyages on the seas are recorded in the Vedic literature.

‘O, Ashvins, that was indeed your greatest exploit on the high seas when you saved Bhujyu from sinking in the ocean with a ship which had 100 oars. Who knew then where the seas began and where the waters would end? Who did know how to control the ships and survive in those swallowing waves of the sea?

(Rig-Veda 1-116-5)

अनारंभणे तत् अवीरयेथाम् अनास्थाने अग्रभणे समुद्रे ।

यत् अश्विनौ ऊह्युर्भुज्युम् अस्तं शतारित्रां नावम् आतस्थिवंसम् ।

In another place a Vedic poet tells us, ‘the Sage Rebh was almost drowned in the waters of the ocean by the bad deeds of cruel people. The poor sage had been plunged in the waters like a horse. On that occasion O you heroes, you performed a wonderful feat and saved that great seer. Though these your achievements may belong to the past age, they can never be forgotten.’

(Rig-Veda 1-117-4)

अश्वं न गूळहम् अश्विना दुरेवैः ऋषिं नरा वृषणा रेभम् अप्सु ।

संतं रिणीथो विप्रतं दंसोमिन् वां जूर्यति पूर्याकृतानि ॥

Of these two references the first one tells us that the art of Bharatiya navigation had reached a level so high as to manufacture a ship with 100 oars. The second mention, though it does not expressly refer to a ship, presupposes it for the accomplishment of the rescue of a sage. Besides these references

to bigger ships, there are a number of mentions of smaller navigable boats meant for different purposes. Some were lovely to ply for pleasure; and some others had wing-like oars! Let us look at some of the smaller boats in the Rig-Veda.

'Varuna knows both the path of birds who fly in the sky. as also the routes of ships in the seas.' (Rig-Veda 1-3-7).

वेदा यो वीनां पदं अन्तरिक्षेण पतताम् ।

वेद नावः समुद्रियः ॥ ७ ॥

The sage Vasishtha recounts, 'when Varuna and I myself (Vasishtha) were once en voyage our boat sailed into the mid-sea; the boat was swinging up and down on the rising and falling waves of the ocean, which we enjoyed as if we were upon a swing, being tossed up and down.' (Rig-Veda 7-88-3).

आ यत् रुद्राव वरुणः च नावं प्रयत् समुद्रम् ईस्याव मध्यम् ।

अधियत् अर्वास्तुभिः चराव प्र प्रसङ्खे ईक्षयावहे शुभेकम् ॥

It does not require more proof in the face of these references to establish that the Vedic Arvas were conversant with the art of navigation and used to take long voyages in their actionful life. Coming to a little later period, of Atharva-Veda, we come across some very fascinating similes and comparisons to the crossing of the seas in boats.

The Bodhayana Dharma Sutra actually refers to the sea-going ships, which implied voyages to distant and near islands. The Arthashastra of Kautilya has one whole chapter dealing with this admiralty division under the Superintendent of Boats and Ships. The Superintendent is reckoned to be an officer belonging to the army organisation.

Coming to the historical and legendary literature of Bharat, we find inexhaustible description of crossing of the oceans by ships. The Varah Puran refers to traders who went to distant islands in search of pearls. It is well-known that the regions of Kalinga and Trilinga on the eastern sea board of Bharat were very much advanced in the art of navigation. The latter kingdom had adopted the 'ship' as its symbol of the State. The old coins of this kingdom bore the ships as symbols.

There is a treatise called the 'Yuktikalpataru', written by king Bhoja. This work gives technical descriptions of different

types of ships and boats in all their varieties. The three chief classes referred to in the work are 'Sarva-Mandir', 'Madhya Mandir' and 'Agra Mandir'. The first variety of the ship had been all of cabins for the passengers or soldiers; the second variety had only a cabin in the centre and the third had it in the prow of the boat. The three types had, of course, different purposes, the first was to carry passengers, the second was only for pleasure-voyages and the third was for longer trips or voyages in very trying weathers. The 'Yuktikalpataru' tells of this in detail. Megasthenes, as usual, gives exhaustive descriptions of the navigation system of the Mauryas. Kautilya deals in details with all the different types of ships and their uses in war and peace times.

We have quoted above all the instances from the later literature. The Vedas do not contain any exhaustive or suggestive references of the subject. But it is beyond doubt that ships, boats and the art of navigation were well-known to the Vedic people. Prof. Dikshitar observes in this connection: 'From this we may conclude that in ancient India, ships were employed in warfare at least as early as the Rig-Vedic times, though only on a scale which would appear insignificant today, what with U-boats and submarines.'

The admiralty, whether it was a regular wing of the Vedic organisation of army or not, may be a controversial question, yet this much appears to be certain that the Vedic people had progressed enough to use the ships and boats. The Western scholars have advanced an argument against the existence of navigation or the knowledge of the art of navigation in the Vedic times simply on the ground of absence of words like the rudder, anchor, etc. These scholars opine that there is no mention of the practice of fish-eating in Vedic times and from this they conclude that sea-going was not a regular habit with the Vedic people. But as we have quoted above, what a renowned sage like Vasishtha himself describes realistically his personal experience of the swinging on the crests of waves which cannot be brushed aside. It should be remembered that this sort of swinging on the waves is possible only on the sea and not in the river water.

The Shantiparva of Mahabharat mentions ships as a wing

of the army. Vidur had arranged a ship for the safe crossing of the river when the Pandavas came out of fire in the lac-house. This ship, it is mentioned, contained war weapons.

In the chapter of Sabhaparva when the five Pandava brothers went for the conquest of the directions, Sahadev is reported to have crossed the seas and conquered a number of 'Mlechhas' and captured their habitations.

In the Valmiki Ramayana the flight of Hanuman in the sky is compared to a ship sailing on the seas. When Rama directed his lieutenants to different directions in search of Sita, he sent Sugriv to the islands of Sumatra, Java, Bali, etc. The Red Sea has also been mentioned in that connection. It cannot be imagined that the monkey Chieftain could have gone to these different islands and sailed to the Red Sea without navigable ships. There is a description in which one Rakshash by name Durmukh has been shown as asking Ravana to permit him to fight the enemy on the sea.

In the Manusmriti war-ships as well as marine encounters have been intimately mentioned. These ancient authors called the Captain of a war-ship by a special term 'Naukakarmajiva'. Thus we have seen that since the Vedic times right through later periods down to the epics and legends, there have been consistent references and descriptions of sea-voyages of the Aryas and quite an indicative data to presume that some sort of admiralty division must have existed.

Had the Vedic or the post-Vedic Aryas any experience of flights in the sky? Had they any acquaintance with the art of building air-ships? We do not ask if they had an air-force. It is indeed a fact that in the long interval between the Vedic period and the historic times for unaccountable reasons as irresistible as the elemental visitations of the descent of snows, deluges and terrible earth-quakes—very many things which were known to the Vedic ancestors were lost forever and completely forgotten. The magnitude of the cataclysm was so, unimaginable, that as legends inform us hardly any of the human population survived to revive the memories, the art and sciences and the pristine culture and civilisation. In Bharat somehow some fragments of the Vedas could be salvaged and saved. All else was irreparably lost—even the relics,

ruins, traces, or memories were gone. So much so that today we consider it absurd to imagine that the Vedic people might have invented the science of aeronautics and the art of making flying machines. If we explore all the references in our literature, there is substantial evidence to suggest the existence of aeroplanes. In the Brahmana literature, so many of the ceremonies in the sacrifice have been compared to the flights of planes in the sky. There are other direct references to the aeroplanes in the Vedic literature. For instance, in first Mandal, the poet praises the Ashvins in the following words:

‘O Ashvins, just as a man leaves this world after death, in the same manner Tugra drowned Bhujyu in the depths of the seas. But then you came to his rescue and having lifted him up, you rescued him by means of an automatic (auto-kinetic) ship which sailed in the atmosphere untouched by water.’

(Rig-Veda 1-116-3)

तुम्रो ह भुज्युम् अश्विना उदमेधे रथि न कश्चित् ममृषौ अवा हाः ।

तम् ऊह्यु नोमिर् आत्मन्वतीभिर् अतरिक्षपृथ्वाभिः अपोदकभिः ॥ ३ ॥

This description does not fit in with any other conveyance or the means of the rescue except an aeroplane. In the later Puran literature the instances of air-flying are too numerous. Shalva, the enemy of Shri Krishna invaded his capital Dwaraka from the skies and that must be by means of the flying planes. The great Asur architect ‘Maya’ had one very expensive plane with four wheels and 12,000 measures of length. Ramayana describes Ravana as coming to Bharat by air by means of chariots. It was the air-chariot which he used to carry away Sita and Jatayu destroyed it. What must be this air-worthy chariot of Ravana but an aeroplane? The Pushpak in which Rama returned to Ayodhya is too well-known to the Bharatiya people. The description of the flight of Rama from Lanka to Ayodhya as given by Valmiki is so very realistic that even a modern flyer would certainly vouch its correctness.

It is not only the planes broadly but their different parts, processes of manufacture, materials, names, etc., have been recorded in full details in our ancient literature. Bhoja, one of the well-known authors on the art of war, in his book called

the 'Samaranganasutradhar' describes finely how the Bharatiya people valued machines in their lives. This author Bhoja informs us: 'One man can run many machines; there are some machines which require many men to run them; compactness and secrecy is the very soul of a machine; by adequate machinery we can exploit all the good qualities of so many different materials, as we can also transform these qualities into something more useful; there is no end to what miracles machines can achieve; they can, for instance, enable the human being that walks only on the solid earth to travel in the air; they can also bring down on earth the things that move in the atmosphere. Man can materialise all his aspirations by the use of machines. What is difficult to accomplish by hands man can easily do it by the help of machines.'

(Samaranganasutradhar 31-45-72)

एकं बहूनि चलयेत् बहुभिश्चालयते परम् ।

सुष्ठुष्ट्वमलक्ष्यत्वं यंत्राणां परमो गुणः ॥

तथा जालानुगाश्चेष्टा विरुद्धा यास्तु जातितः ।

ताः सर्वा अपि सिद्ध्यन्ति सम्यक् यंत्रस्य साधनात् ॥

भूचरणां गतिर्व्योम्नि तथा व्योमचरागमः ।

चेष्टितान्यपि मर्त्यानां तथा भूमिस्पृशामिव ॥

जायन्ते यन्त्रनिर्माणाद् विविधानीप्सितानि च ।

दुष्करं यद्यदन्यच्च तत्तद् यन्त्रात् प्रसिद्ध्यति ॥

This piece which is taken from an ancient technical treatise on the art and science of war should make us think seriously about our misconception in regard to the attitude of the ancient Bharatiyas towards machines and correct it. In face of such clear evidence, it is wrong to say that the Bharatiya people were either unacquainted with machines as means for making the life happier and easier or that they shunned them. There is no doubt that the Bharatiyas never abused the machines. Having said so much about the function of a machine as conceived by the Bharatiya people, we now quote the description of an aeroplane from the same book 'Samaranganasutradhar'.

'An aeroplane should be manufactured with very light but seasoned and strong wood. A small tank containing the liquid of mercury is then placed in a specific position in the body of the plane. This liquid of mercury is afterwards raised to a high temperature with a fire stove. The man who pilots this machine, first turns the two wings (or fans) and then he raises the latent power generated by the mercury-liquid. The miraculous result is the plane lifts up high in the air and flies away. This plane which resembles a 'temple of god' is manufactured by a skilled artisan. It is provided with sufficient and strong tanks containing the liquid mercury which has to be raised to a very high temperature. It is with the qualities and energy generated by this ace of the metallic elements—the mercury-liquid, which is stored into iron pots (tanks) the machine takes off and flies in the air with terrible sounds. The body of the machine has many iron parts joined and soldered. The aeroplane when it lifts high up and traverses in the air produces a sound like the roaring of a lion.'

(Samaranganasutradhar 31-95-99)

लघुदारुमयं महाविद्वङ्गं दृढसुश्लिष्टतनुं विहाय तस्य ।

उदरे रसयन्त्रमादधीत ज्वलनाधारमधोऽस्य चाग्निपूर्णम् ॥

तत्रारूढः पुरुषः तस्य पक्षद्वन्द्वोच्चालप्रोज्झितेनानिलेन ।

सुप्तस्यान्तः पारदस्यास्य शक्त्या चित्रं कुर्वन्नम्बरे याति दूरम् ॥

इत्थमेव सुरमन्दिरतुल्यं सञ्चलस्य लघुदारुविमानम् ।

आदधीत विधिना चतुरोऽन्तस्तस्य पारदभृतान् दृढकुम्भान् ॥

अयः कपालाहितमन्दवह्निः प्रतप्ततत्कुम्भभुवा गुणेन ।

व्योम्नोऽग्निलिङ्गाभरणत्वमेति संतप्तगर्जद्रसराजशक्त्या ॥

वृत्तसन्धितमथायस्यंत्रं तद् विधाय रसपूरितमन्तः ।

उच्चदेशविनिधापिततप्तं सिंहनादसुरजं विदधाति ॥

A pertinent question that may now be asked here is, is it that the aeroplanes and the art of flying which have been so profusely described in Bharatiya literature from Rig-Veda to Ramayana, and which have been also reported to have been used in warfare was so completely forgotten as not to leave even a relic or a trace of it except these mentions in books.

The question is indeed genuine and looks like unanswerable. We have already given our surmise how this must have happened. There is another and more plausible reply in the 'Samaranganasutradhar'. Bhoja tells us: 'We have described the aeroplanes and not their processes. The reason is not ignorance, but the desire to keep the secrets of the formulas undivulged. It is useless, rather harmful, to divulge the secrets of scientific formulas.'

This is indeed a very convincing answer to the above question. Even in this modern age nations take utmost precautions to keep the secrets of their scientific knowledge from being stolen by rivals or even friends. We may enjoy the benefits of scientific research and advancement, but the secrets of success are always sealed and concealed.

यन्त्राणां घटनानोक्ता गुप्त्यर्थं नाज्ञतावशात् ।

तत्र हेतुरयं ज्ञेयो व्यक्ता नैते फलप्रदाः ॥

A literary production like Arthashastra of Kautilya, it is believed, was kept a very guarded secret in the custody of the State. It was on that account, that such a treatise was not a matter of common knowledge and came to light so late. If this be the case of a literary production which affects the lives of the people, how much more strictly the secrets of science must have been guarded should not be difficult to guess. It is quite an irrelevant question whether the production of aeroplanes in those days was on vast scale for public use or not as at present.

What was considered in ancient times to be the standard army? Was there any standing army? What were the proportions of different divisions? There is no doubt that the regular army consisted only of the Kshatriya class. According to Kautilya the army should be composed of the Kshatriya class purely, which was by far the most effective and reliable. Strong physique, inherent character, love for discipline, ever-alertness in the duty of a soldier, loyalty to the class profession, indefatigable energy to go through the hardships of war, capacity to endure the extremities of climates, and lastly the intrinsic faith in the profession of soldiery as the virtue of his blood and bones, made every Kshatriya by far a better

soldier than any one from any other class. There have been so many occasions in the history of this nation when all castes and classes had to be summoned and mobilised to defend the country. On such critical occasions, the armies were composed of the Brahmans, Vaishyas and Shudras also. According to Kautilya, the Kshatriyas even if in very small number, could make a better fighting force than a mixture of forced or hired soldiers from all other classes and castes. This opinion has been universally accepted by military scientists like Clauswitz and Napoleon. Baron Clauswitz in his treatise on war observes: 'Military virtue is a quality of standing armies only.'

It has been noted that as early as the Mahabharat times many Brahmans had been honoured with the highest posts of Commanders of armies. Drona, Krup, Ashvatthama were the Commanders of Kaurava army. Pushyimitra's military prowess and its national significance has not been adequately presented by historians. Kumaramaty Prithvisen was a Brahman, the Commander of the army of Kumargupta. Mahamalla Narsimha Varma of the Pallava Dynasty had the great Brahman, Paramjoti as his Commander. It was this Brahman Commander who defeated Pulkeshin II and conquered his capital Vatapi. In the forgotten history of Vijayanagar Empire, we get a number of Brahman military officers; and lastly in the latest period of our military glory under the Marathas, the golden pages of conquest and the struggle for liberation have been written by Brahman soldiers like Balaji Vishvanath right up to Tatya Tope. The Brahmans in contravention of their normal class-prescriptions took to arms in times of national emergencies and catastrophies. It has happened always that when the other classes failed in their duties, patriotic Brahman youths who should have continued their normal course of life—the performance of sacrifices, the study of the Vedas, and the teaching of the society, adopted this profession of soldiery, and indeed made their unforgettable marks on history. In spite of their brilliant record, the confirmed opinion of military writers like Kautilya who was himself a Brahman is against all the other classes taking to arms.

In short, the whole organisation of army in the Vedic times was mostly manned and managed by the Kshatriya class. In

times of national crisis, others were indeed called to serve and save the country. But the standing army as such was made by the Kshatriya class which was expected to live and fight for the protection of their gods, religion, hearths and homes.

We do not like to miss to note here the sub-division of the units of the army. The lowest division of the army in those days was called a 'Patti' and it ran up in order like 'Senamukh', 'Gulma', 'Gana', 'Vahini', 'Prutana', 'Chamu', 'Anikini' and 'Akshauhini'. The smallest unit of 'Patti' contained one chariot, one elephant, three horsemen and three foot soldiers. Three Patties made one 'Senamukh', three 'Senamukhas' one 'Gulma', three 'Gulmas' one 'Gana', three 'Ganas' one 'Vahini', three 'Vahinies' one 'Prutana', three 'Prutanas' one 'Chamu', three 'Chamus' one 'Anikini' and 10 such 'Anikinies' made one 'Akshauhini'. As a whole, we find that one 'Akshauhini' contained 20,870 chariots, 21,700 elephants, 65,610 horsemen and 1,09,350 foot soldiers. In the Mahabharat war, we are told that there were all together 18 such 'Akshauhinis' on the battlefield of Kurukshetra engaged to kill each other, which they did leaving behind only 10 persons on both sides together.

CHAPTER XXVI

WAR AND STRATEGY IN THE VEDIC TIMES

It is a well recognised truism that more than the army strategy and tactics account for the victory of an army in war. Very great armies have been known to have been defeated only for want of proper advice in action. There have been on the other hand some glorious victories of very small armies led by bold and expert strategists and tacticians. There is no doubt that even in war it is the brain behind the army more than the arms that defeats the enemy. Our ancient thinkers had recognised the significance of the war councils and expert strategists. They had recommended an advisory council to guide the tactics of the fighting forces. Kings were advised to abide by the decisions of these councillors and experts who actually formed an important wing of the army organisation.

Shukraniti rightly observes:

अनीतिज्ञः समर्थोऽपि रिपुणा परिभूयते ।
गजोऽपि चाम्बुधौ मग्नो महामत्स्यैर्यथा तथा ॥
अनीतिरेव सच्छिद्रं राज्ञो नित्यं भयावहम् ।
शत्रुसंवर्धने प्रोक्तं बलन्हासकरं महत् ॥
अस्ति बुद्धिमतां श्रेणिर्न त्वेको बुद्धिमानतः ।
देशे काले च पुरुषे नीतियुक्तिमनेकधा ॥
कल्पयन्ति च तद्विद्यां दृष्ट्वा रुद्धां तु प्राक्तनाम् ॥

‘A giant of an elephant would be torn to pieces by trifling fishes in the sea-water. Similarly a very powerful king if misguided in political diplomacy would be ruined on the battlefield by ingenuous enemies. If a vessel has some holes, it will contain nothing. Similarly if the king’s policy has loopholes or weak points, all his apparent strength and wealth will fritter away. Intelligent people must act together. They must examine every time the efficacy and utility of some device or principle in a given state of circumstances. If the conditions

require the abandonment of the traditional policy, they must wisely command to the king to make a change.'

It is beyond doubt that every kingdom in ancient Bharat right up to the historical times had some war councils composed of intelligent diplomats and war-strategists as mentioned in the Shukraniti. The Bharatiya masters of the science of war have never under-rated the significance of strategy even in the open battlefields. Bhishma observes to Yudhisthir, 'rest assured that it is wisdom and intelligence that win the game as said by Manu. Nothing can be successfully achieved without the help of intelligence. The strength of arm is only supplementary.'

वर्तस्व बुद्धिमूलं तु विजयं मनुरब्रवीत् ।

बुद्धिश्चेष्टानि कर्माणि बाहुमध्यानि भारत ॥

Valmiki tells us: 'The king's advisers can be divided in three classes; the first and best is that type of men who are always alert about the interests of the kingdom. These councillors must have unanimous opinions about their policies. The council must contain near-friends as well as benevolent relations who are selflessly interested in the welfare of the kingdom. The council must, not only rely upon human endeavour, but must also invoke divine favours. Such a council which thinks wisely on all aspects and which invokes the help of the gods, is indeed the best fruitful in gaining the victory on the battlefield.'

त्रिविधाः पुरुषा लोके उत्तमाधममध्यमाः ।

तेषां तु समवेतानां गुणदोषौ वदाम्यहम् ॥

मंत्रिभिर्हितसंयुक्तैः समर्थैर्मंत्रनिर्णयम् ।

मित्रैर्वापि समानार्थैर्बान्धवैरपि वा हितैः ॥

सहितो मंत्रयित्वा यः कर्मारम्भान्प्रवर्तयेत् ।

दैवे च कुरुते यत्नं तमाहुः पुरुषोत्तमम् ॥

एकोऽर्थं विमृशेदेको धर्मं प्रकुरुते मनः ।

एकः कार्याणि कुरुते तमाहुर्मध्यमं नरम् ॥

गुणदोषावनिश्चित्य लब्ध्वा धर्मव्यपाश्रयम् ।

करिष्यामीति यः कार्यमुपेक्षेत्स नराधमः ॥

यथेमे पुरुषा नित्यमुत्तमाधममध्यमाः ।
 एवं मंत्रा हि विज्ञेया उत्तमाधममध्यमाः ॥
 ऐकमत्यमुपागम्य शास्त्रदृष्टेन चक्षुषा ।
 मंत्रिणो यत्र निरतास्तमाहुर्मंत्रमुत्तमम् ॥
 बह्वीरपि मतीर्गत्वा मंत्रिणामर्थनिर्णये ।
 पुनः मंत्रैकतां प्राप्तः स मंत्रो मध्यमः स्मृतः ॥
 अन्योन्यं मतिमास्थाय यत्र संप्रति भाष्यते ।
 नचैकमत्यं श्रेयोऽस्ति मंत्रः सोऽधम उच्यते ॥

Such war councils consisting of wise and diplomatic leaders used to give proper advice to the kings on the questions of war and peace. Generally their advice was considered to be binding and was invariably followed by the king. There were, of course, instances when a thoughtless king rejected the advice of the war council. In the Vedic age the Purohit and the other councillors tried to keep the kings always on the right path. We have already referred to how Purohit Vasishta led King Sudas to a brilliant victory against heavy odds of confederacy of the 10 kings. This war of 10 kings presents a good illustration of a well organised army led by intelligent strategist to a decisive victory. Other famous Purohitis like Shritbandhu, Medhauthi, Bharadwaja, and others have always upheld the tradition and saved the kings and their kingdoms simply by the merit of their intelligent directions.

Next section of the army is the finance. The treasury has been always rightly considered to be the backbone of a good army. Shukracharya, in his law book, observes:

‘The origin and source of all strength of an army is the treasury and the treasury itself depends upon the army. The treasuries increase if the armies are strong and victorious.’

(Shukraniti 4. 2-11).

बलमूलो भवेत्कोशः कोशमूलं बलं स्मृतम् ।

बलसंरक्षणात्कोशराष्ट्रवृद्धिरिक्षयः ॥

Shukracharya seems to give more importance to the army here in comparison with the treasury but Kautilya differs from him and emphasises that the treasury is of vital importance in

the waging of war or the maintenance of peace. In the Arthashastra, Kautilya categorically affirms: 'It may not matter if the army is small but the treasury must always be full; if the treasury is full a new and fresh army can be raised; but a big army without the treasury will always become dangerous to the safety of the State itself.' This opinion of Kautilya is consistent with the thoughts of the great warrior Bhishma. In Shantiparva he tells Yudhisthir: 'The treasury and the army are the two strong pillars of a kingdom. Of these the treasury is at the base of an army. To increase the treasury, it may become necessary to tax the people. Without taxation, armies cannot be raised. There cannot be a sacrifice without violence to the beasts, which is considered not commendable. But even the violence is prescribed as rightful for the purpose of sacrifices. So are harassment and taxation of the people for the purpose of raising and maintaining big armies.'

(Shantiparva 130/35, 36, 37).

राज्ञः कोशबले मूलं कोशमूलं पुनर्बलम् ।

तन्मूलं सर्वधर्माणां धर्ममूलः पुनः प्रजाः ॥ ३५ ॥

नान्यानपीडयित्वेह कोशः शक्यः कुतो बलम् ।

तदर्थं पीडयित्वा च दोषं प्राप्तुं न सोऽर्हति ॥ ३६ ॥

अकार्यमपि यज्ञार्थं क्रियते यज्ञकर्मसु ।

एतस्मात्कारणाद्वाजा न दोषं प्राप्तुमर्हति ॥ ३७ ॥

It is the proposition of the Mahabharat that when the treasury becomes empty, the strength of the kingdom begins to wane. The remuneration of soldiers and occasional rewards to them, the grades and promotions to officers, secret expenses on the formation and maintenance of fifth-columnists in the enemy countries, repairs and new constructions of roads and means for the actions of the armies, provision of all the requirements and equipments of the soldiers, a very efficacious and alert intelligence service, and last but not the least an organisation to create disturbance and sow disaffection in the land and the people of the enemies, all these can be accomplished if the treasury of a kingdom is full. Kautilya seems to be-

lieve that the expenses on the army should never be objected nor cut down. It is very revealing to glance on what items in the army organisation money was sanctioned. To keep the loyalty of the soldiers incorruptible, it is necessary to keep them beyond temptations. All writers on military science have invariably advised that the soldier must be paid well and regularly. Narad in the Sabha Parva advised Yudhisthir to pay greater attention to this well established and universally accepted practice. From the Arthashastra and from contemporary writings of Greek visitors, we can have glimpses of the Maurya armies and the huge expenses on them. Prof. Dikshitar observes: 'The Mauryan king had a standing army of 600,000 foot soldiers, 30,000 horses and 9,000 elephants. This alone entailed an expenditure of roughly £ 170 millions. This does not include the pay of the army officers such as Commander-in-Chief and other Commanders, the expenses of the fleet, of the armoury and arsenal, of the Commissariat and several minor departments which were so many adjuncts to the Defence Department. If these were included, we have to estimate the defence expenses of the Mauryan State to be several million pounds sterling. Arrian tells us that the army officials were all paid very liberally. It appears that the Mauryan Government believed in a contented army.'

If this was the case in the Mauryan period, there is sufficient ground to guess that the beginnings of this policy and practice could be traced in the Vedic age. In Rig-Veda itself, we find a number of places where the treasury has been mentioned as the backbone of the army. A poet observes: 'O Indra, in all our fights we shall pray you to accord complete victory on your followers who are rich and wealthy.'

(Rig-Veda 6-22-10).

एभिर्नृभिर्निन्द्र त्वायुभिश्च मघवद्विर्मेषवन् विश्व आजौ ।

यावो न वृत्रैरभि सन्तो अयः क्षपो मदेम शरदश्च पूर्वोः ॥

In another place another poet tells us: 'O Indra, may you confer on us unfathomable stores of wealth so that we can

fight our enemies with them, so that we can convert the Dasas into Aryas, so that we can destroy the enemies of man.'

(Rig-Veda 6-22-10).

आसंयतामिन्द्र नः स्वस्ति शत्रुतूर्याय बृहतीममृधाम् ।

यया दासान्यार्याणि वृत्रा करो वज्रिन्सुतुकः नाहुषाणि ॥

This very verse occurs in the Atharva-Veda again. The two verses quoted above give clear indication that the treasury was considered to be indispensable to fight a successful war even in those primitive days. In the descriptions of the marching armies we get a reference as to what equipments had to be carried. The treasury is specifically mentioned as an important item in the equipment of the marching army. The poet says: 'Let Indra be the leader of our army. Let the treasury and the sacrificial fire and the Soma-juice accompany our leader. That will enable our armies to gain decisive victory.'

(Rig-Veda 10-103-8).

इन्द्रः आसां नेता बृहस्पतिः दक्षिणा यज्ञः पुरः एतु सोमः ।

देव सेनानां अभिऽभञ्जतीनां जयन्तीनां मरुतः यन्तु अग्रम् ॥

This leaves no doubt that treasury was considered to be a very essential item in the preparation of war.

The next section to which the army organisers of Vedic times paid serious attention was the armoury and the arsenal. Kautilya refers to this section under the caption of 'Shastrashala'. Like all other departments which were ingenuously organised in the Mauryan times, this 'Shastrashala' or the armoury-stores were also looked after to the minutest details. There is, however, no direct or specific mention of the military stores or the armoury in the Vedic literature. But when all other departments have been organised, it could not be imagined that armoury could have been neglected—for no war could be fought without a proper arrangement for the supply of arms whether they were of old, crude variety, or as they are of modern scientific manufacture. There is enough ground to imagine that the manufacture of arms and weapons was on the whole the care and job of the king's officers.

Now we come to a very complicated department under the

care of the war council. The foreign or external affairs have claimed a great attention since early days. A regular reference of this activity is found in the *Arthashastra* of Kautilya. Megasthenes also confirms the existence of such a department in the Mauryan statecraft. But it seems that it had not attained that spirit or perfect condition as it did in the later Gupta period. In some stone-inscriptions of Samudragupta, we get the mention of two ministers of the kingdom called the 'Sandhi Vighraha' and 'Sachiva'. The first was the title of the minister who was in charge of the treaties and alliances with kings and kingdoms in the country. The second was the post of the minister who looked to the relations of the State with foreign nations. We know the name of the Minister-in-charge of Foreign Relations of Samudragupta as Harisen. Going back to the Mauryan period we find that such a department must have been working in a regular manner. In the Ashokan inscriptions we have a direct reference to the treaties signed with the foreign States very far away from Bharatiya borders. The talks between the Panis and Sarama quoted before, expressly clarify that she was speaking as an ambassador or an agent of the Vedic people, sent on a special mission. It has, however, to be admitted that there are no direct references or any evidence to advocate the existence of such a department in the Rig-Vedic times.

What is in modern times called the intelligence department was in existence in the Mauryan period. This Mauryan period can for all purposes be taken to be a realistic window exhibiting the best consummation of the Vedic concepts of nationhood. The friend, philosopher and the greatest architect of the Mauryan race and in fact the prowessful reviver of the Vedic age, Kautilya, had put to this intelligence department to unimaginable extent in the miraculous achievement of overthrowing the Nandas and securing the kingdom to his disciple Chandragupta. Of some departments which had been perfected to minutest details, this one was in the Mauryan times. Kautilya's '*Arthashastra*' excels Machiavelli's '*Prince*'—in all respects—and most in its omnifarious visions and most comprehensive approach and outlook of life. Kautilya perfected this branch of statecraft.

Coming to the Rig-Vedic age, the first thing we have to note is that in those primitive days, there was hardly any nation developed in all its aspects like Bharat. Races and communities were scattered over the larger portions of Asia and it was very difficult to keep any political relations with these nomadic tribes who were almost always on the move. Kingdoms had not yet come to be formed or acknowledged. That is possibly the reason why in the Rig-Veda we do not get any mention of the name or the functions of a foreign department. The solitary instance which explicitly mentions of a spy being sent to a country far beyond the seas to gather information about the cows that were robbed away is that of Sarma who goes to the land of Panis. Beyond that, no more information about this branch can be dug out of the Vedas.

There remains only one other fact in regard to the defence organisation to be noted. According to the traditional Bharatiya ideas a kingdom was formed of seven factors, namely, the king, his ministers, his friends, his treasury, the people, the army, and the forts. The king was, of course, the apex of the whole organisation of a kingdom of which the forts were the bases. In modern times of mechanised armies, long-range cannons and missiles and the organisation of air-forces, forts and castles may have become completely useless as fortifications, defence basis or as watch towers of a country. But in the primitive days when the transport of arms, ammunition and armies, was limited only to the horses, the forts were built as impregnable bastions for the safety and defence of kings and kingdoms. All over the world, forts used to be constructed at very strategic points to defend the liberties of the people. According to different situations, forts acquired strategic values and distinctive names. Forts were created on the tops of hills or in the passes between two ranges or on the mouths of rivers and harbours guarding the safety of the hinterland and the coast-line. Some forts were naturally formed and strengthened by long ranges of mountains or thick forests. All these have been described by the political writers like Kautilya and also by the law-givers like Manu.

A military fort generally carried enough stores and stocks of grains to enable the soldiers to live through the period of

enemy action. We do not propose to go into the detailed descriptions of these forts and castles of ancient times. It is enough to note that the forts played a very important part in the life of the nation. Even in the Rig-Vedic period, in that memorable war between Indra and Vritra, Indra has been credited to have destroyed to pieces the fort of Vritra. Historians have noticed in the descriptions of the War of Ten Kings the existence of forts in which they had taken refuge. The Rig-Vedic literature contains two words 'Durga' and 'Pur' to mean the fort. Lord Mahendra killed Shambar also in his fort. This Shambar is described to have possessed 100 hill-forts which were shattered to pieces by Indra.

(Rig-Veda 6-31-4).

त्वं शतानि भव शम्बरस्य पुरः जघन्य अप्रतीनि दस्योः ॥

The Aitareya and Koushitaki Brahman also refer to the forts. The Aitareya Brahman refers to the three Fires as three forts which performed the function of halting the assault of the 'Asuras'. This simile given by the author of the Aitareya Brahman has indeed a significant value.

The Bharatiya people had attained a very high degree of skill in the building of forts of different kinds. The descriptions of the Forts of Lanka and Kishkinda in Ramayana are an astonishing evidence of this fact.

The Vedic and post-Vedic armies were headed by a 'Senapati', the Commander-in-Chief who was next to the king. Under the Commander there were Generals and Captains who led battalions and divisions. They were called 'Sena-Pranetas' meaning, leaders of armies. It will be amusing to note that the seven 'Akshauhinis' of the Pandavas had each of them one leader or captain: (1) Drupad, (2) Virat, (3) Drushtadumna, (4) Shikhandi, (5) Satyaki, (6) Chekitan, and (7) Bhimsen were the seven leaders of the Pandava forces. Bhishma, the grand old warrior was the first Commander-in-Chief of the Kaurava army, whereas the Pandavas had appointed Drushtadumna—comparatively a much younger warrior to lead their armies.

Kautilya has given all classifications and definitions of the army officials as well as their respective remunerations. It was the convention of the times that the Chief of the army

was selected from the Kshatriya class. The army chief was expected to be well-versed in the science of the Vedas as well as the art of war. This was possible only in the case of Brahmans and Kshatriyas. But the Kshatriya by virtue of his inherent profession and proficiency in the art of war was chosen invariably to lead the armies. But there are instances in which, as we know, Brahman warriors were also selected for this most important position in the hierarchy of a State. It will be recollected that the Commander-in-Chief of the Mauryan king Brihadrath was a Brahman by name Pushyamitra. It was this Brahman soldier who performed an epic task in the annals of Bharatiya history. It was Pushyamitra who acted very mercilessly against the Buddhist to whom had come to dominate the Bharatiya empire since Ashokan times adversely affecting Vedic faith and life and disintegrating the social order. Pushyamitra, the Mauryan Commander, usurped all power and kingdom and drove away the Buddhists, destroying those who remained behind. This is not the occasion to digressing to the heroic role of Pushyamitra in the defence of Vedic Dharma and the nation. We only wanted to emphasise that when others failed the Brahman rushed to the front to save his Vedic Dharma and Rashtra—whether with arms or with ‘mantras’. Thus the Commander of an army used to be normally a Kshatriya. Besides the requisite quality of bravery and knowledge of the art and science of war, the Chief of the army was required to possess a number of outstanding virtues. This can be gathered from the address of Bhishma to his king Duryodhan after the latter had invested and anointed him as the Senapati of the Kaurava army. Bhishma says:

‘Saluting Kartikeya, the Commander of the gods I accept this post of your Army-Chief. I am well-versed in the science of war, in the art of arms and weapons, in the technique of army organisation, and the manoeuvres of the forces. I know well the different classes and grades in the armed forces and can extract work from them. In the movements on the battle-field, marches of the forces, attacks and retreats in all the deployments, I feel I can equal Lord Brihaspati. I have practical knowledge of the formations of fighting forces according to the practices of gods, Gandharwas and men. I feel con-

fidant that I will be able to vanquish your enemies, the Pandavas. I am sure that I shall be able to defend our own army. O, prince, therefore, remove all fear from your mind.'

नमस्कृत्य कुमाराय सेनान्ये शक्तिपाणये ।

अहं सेनापतिस्तेऽद्य भविष्यामि न संशयः ॥

सेनाकर्मण्याभिज्ञोऽस्मि व्यूहेषु विविधेषु च ।

कर्म कारयितुं चैव भुतानप्यभुतांस्तथा ॥

यात्रायाने च युद्धे च तथा प्रशमनेषु च ।

भृशं वेद महाराज यथा वेद बृहस्पतिः ।

व्यूहानां च समारंभान् देवगन्धर्वमानुषान् ।

तैरहं मोहयिष्यामि पाण्डवान् व्येतु ते ज्वरः ॥

सोऽहं योत्स्यामि तत्त्वेन पालयंस्तव बाहिनीम् ।

यथावत् शास्त्रतो राजन् व्येतु ते मानसो ज्वरः ॥

This address of Bhishma who was the first Commander of Duryodhan which needs no commentary is clear regarding the role of an Army Chief. Kautilya enumerates the different prizes which he recommends to be given to the successful soldiers. According to him for the killing of the king 100,000 Panas were to be given in reward. If some warrior killed the Commander of the enemy army, or the prince of the opposite camp, he was rewarded with 50,000 Panas. If a brave soldier brought an important personality from the enemy camp alive, he was rewarded in double proportion. This Pana was of course the famous gold coin of the Mauryan period which possibly was equal to the value of a shilling of modern times. The Mahabharat also refers to this practice of rewards to successful warriors in proportion to their achievements.

The Rig-Veda in fact does not contain the word 'Senapati'. The common word in the Vedic literature was of course Senani. Right up to the Atharva-Veda this word Senani has been used to indicate the chief of the army who was the most important Executive Officer of the king in matters of war and peace. The executive council consisted of the commander, the prince, the Sachiva, the 'Sandhivigrahik' and the king.

Both the Shukraniti and Mahabharat have laid adequate stress upon the qualities and virtues necessary in the officer called 'Doot' in those days. This 'Doot' performed almost all the functions of the modern ambassador as well as an emissary of a State in a foreign court. This 'Doot' was expected to be very much skilled in the art of knowing the hearts of the opponents from the very faces of all those whom he met; he was required to have very high and retentive memory; he had to be fully acquainted with the conditions of the country and its people; he was required to have good knowledge of the political science in its relation with the treatise of war and peace; he was expected to be bold and very intelligent in his talk. The Mahabharat adds some other qualities as necessary complements of such emissary. Manu has also elaborated on the virtues of the ambassador who had escaped notice in those early days. It will be a repetition to narrate the details of the functions of an ambassador. But it needs mention here that the ambassador was necessarily required to be a man of proved character in the matter of wine, woman and money. Any weak-minded man who could be susceptible to these temptations was never selected for the job of an ambassador. The old maxim was 'goodness and discipline depended upon the fear of punishment; the wrath and security of a nation depended upon the king; and war and peace depended upon the qualities and skill of an ambassador.' It is the ambassador in a foreign court that can stir a war amongst treaty-bound nations or pacify the disturbed relations. The ambassador is employed by the kings to do both the jobs according to the expedencies. The practice of winning over important officers of the enemy kingdom who have been either ignored or offended, has been in vogue in Bharat right from the beginning. It was the ambassador who kept an alert watch on the ambitions of the neighbour States and apprised his master in that regard.

Kautilya who exploited this wing of secret intelligence in a very ingenious and most effective manner has paid very great attention to the training of ambassadors to be sent to foreign courts. The Arthashastra has given very detailed instructions in regard to the role and functions of an emissary in a foreign

court. Much before any war started, he had to keep with him complete information about all matters in regard to the weakness or the strength of the enemy kingdom. It is unnecessary to go through the details of these exhaustive directions by which the ambassador worked out the game of war in favour of his king. Kautilya observes: 'If the emissary or the ambassador got any scent or sound of the disapproval of his king's proposal, then he should keep the talks hanging to gain time. If in the meantime he became afraid of his own liberty and freedom, he should try to decamp and run to the home-country.' Kautilya does not leave the smallest details as regards how the ambassador should carry out his duty in the foreign courts. If we look to the practice and conventions which are observed even in modern times in neighbouring and enemy States in regard to the privileges of the ambassador, we shall find to our surprise that there was hardly any difference in the past and present tactics. Those were the days when cruel despots or autocratic kings disregarded totally or demanded more scrupulously the observance of the conventions in regard to the privileges of ambassadors. It was however recognised as a sanguine principle not to offend an ambassador even if he had said something as per instructions of his king. The prescription of Mahabharat was 'a king should never entertain the thought of killing a Doot under any situation. The killer of an ambassador or an emissary will be condemned to go to hell with all his cabinet of ministers. The king who kills an emissary who is conveying the message of his king, becomes as great a sinner, as the child-killer.'

न तु हन्यान्वृषोजातु इतं कस्याचिदापदि ।

इतस्यहन्ता निरयमाविरोत्सचिवैस्सह ॥ २६ ॥

यथोक्तवादिनं इतं क्षत्रधर्मरतो नृपः ।

यो हन्यात्पितरस्तस्य भ्रूणहत्यामवाप्नुयुः ॥ २७ ॥

So it can be safely assumed that the present practices and conventions had their roots in the wise rules set by the Bharatiya policy.

There are references of such emissaries in the Rig-Vedic and the Brahman literature. The Aitareya Brahman mentions Indra having referred to the Maruts as his 'Sachiya'. The Agni has always been talked of as the emissary of gods, whose advent is indicated by the appearance of 'Agni'. There is one word 'Prahit' which is used in the Taittiriya and Atharva-Vedas in the sense of an emissary or a messenger. The commentators have explained that word to mean 'one who was skilful in collecting all information about the armies of the enemies'.

The officers of the army had different designations and titles according to the number of soldiers, their units and combinations in their charge. One who commanded five 'Padaties' was called a 'Pattipal'; one who led thirty 'Padaties' was called 'Gaulmik'; one over hundred was known as 'Shatanik' and one who commanded thousand platoons was called 'Sahasranik'. The chief of such ten became 'Ayutanika'. This clarification is in conformation of the practice prevailing in the Vedic age as detailed in the Atharva-Veda. Atharva-Veda, however, names the commander as 'Arbudi'.

We have given these different designations and titles of the army officers according to the foot soldiers under their command. But it has to be assumed that they have an inter-relation to the sub-divisions of the army which have been mentioned in the previous chapter. For instance, a Pattipal had one elephant, one chariot, one horse and five foot-soldiers. In the same manner this gradation goes up. The highest officer is the lord of the Akshauhini.

Kautilya lists the details of the grades of remuneration to the soldiers and staff of the army organisation. The Senapati or the Commander-in-Chief was paid 48,000 Panas, the Commander 24,000 Panas, the Superintendent of the Elephant-battery 8,000, the Superintendent of the Cavalry 8,000 and so on. A 'Padati' was paid 500 Panas. These are obviously annual remunerations.

There was one other class of non-combatant persons who went to the battlefield, though not to fight, but was very much concerned with the victory in it. This was the inspired bard, who delivered very enthusing speeches goading the soldiers to rush to the field and fight for the honour of their

gods and religion, culture and civilisation and the king and the country. This was done by the Purohit or his assistant. Later on regular bards and court-poets were engaged to perform this part. Kautilya compares a battle with a sacrifice in which the Purohit performs the same function as he does in a sacrifice. Here is one small verse which gives a clear idea as to what these bards must have been telling the soldiers on the eve of battle: 'O brave soldiers, may you rush into the enemy forces; may you show your utmost valour. Indra will surely back you with his enthusiasm. Your strong arms will surely give a good account in the fight with the enemy, and you will without any doubt vanquish them and become invincible yourselves.'

(Rig-Veda 10-103-13).

प्रेता जयता नर इन्द्रो वः सम्यच्छतु ।

उग्रावः सन्तु बाह्वोऽनाश्रुष्मा यथासथ ॥

Thus we have tried to present to our readers a general picture of the army organisation of the Vedic people. The Vedic people had, it looks, attained a high stage and skill in the art and science of war. This has been clearly reflected in their songs of victory on the battlefields. Right since the days of the War of Ten Kings up to the conquests of Samudragupta, the Bharatiya armies have been victorious on the battlefields within and outside the borders of Bharat. This glorious record of conquest was, however, never marred by sinister ambitions to trample upon the liberties of other people or merely to swallow their territories. The Bharatiya heroes went out for something more glorious and more sublime than mere conquest of lands or the plunder of wealths.

We shall turn to that golden aspect of the Bharatiya ambition, namely, to reform and civilise the man or as they called it 'Aryanise the world'.

CHAPTER XXVII

WAR AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE VEDIC PEOPLE

ANCIENT writers on war have classified it into different categories. In the opinion of some, a war was 'Dharmayudh' or 'Kootyudh', if it was according to well recognised conventions and codes or in contravention of the same. Another classification was according to the conduct of war whether it followed the practices of gods, demons or the human beings. Yet another categorisation was made on the criterion of the aims and objectives of war. The traditionally recognised war-aims were: (1) Dharma-Vijay, (2) Asura-Vijay, (3) Lobha-Vijay.

In all these different kinds of wars, strategy and tactics played an important role. 'Strategy is the art of bringing the enemy to battle, while tactics are the methods by which a commander endeavours to over-reach the enemy when battle is joined.' This is how the British military scientists define strategy and tactics, and the definition is not very much different from what Manu had said about 2000 years back.

Manu tells us of wars that are fought on three different types of battle-grounds, namely, on the surface of the sea, in the jungles and in plain open fields.

स्यंदनाश्वैः समे युद्धयेदनुपेनौद्विपैस्तथा ।

वृक्षगुलमावृते चापैरसिचर्मायुधैः स्थले ॥

The Bharatiya military writers have according to the exigencies, the national character and local conditions evolved the science of war in all its details. The rules and conventions when and how a commander should march his armies to the battlefield, what seasons are favourable for the start of a war and what are unfavourable, all these have been specifically mentioned in the war books. The war advisers have warned the kings against the commencement of action in particular seasons and times but the same authorities do not hesitate to mention that these rules could be shelved in emergencies and

inescapable circumstances. Our forefathers who were so meticulous in regard to the observance of rules and regulations, were equally ready to brush aside all of them when the point of national honour was at stake. For instance, Shukra in his advice tells us that a war in so many seasons is not commendable but when women, cows and the Brahmans, whose honour must always be maintained, are killed or dishonoured, a king should declare war without any reference or consideration of propitious times.

The army on march to a battlefield was led by the captains and commanders, and the Chief used to follow in the rear. The marching armies went ahead in different formations according to the convenience as well as ease which the roads and the terrain allowed. These formations of the marching armies were called 'Makar', 'Soochi', 'Chakra' (crocodile, needle, circle, respectively), etc. Valmiki Ramayana gives very fascinating descriptions of the army of Rama which set its march on Lanka on the auspicious conjunction of the constellation of Uttara Falguni.

We quote below the description of the march of Rama's army on Lanka as it gives a correct idea of the organisation and arrangements before the start of a major war. Ramachandra instructs his Commander Neela: 'Take your forces ahead in the van so that you can reconnoitre the country and clear the roads for us. You should lead the army by such roads that there will be no scarcity of water or food on the way. The roads should be pleasant to march with the cover of blue and cool forests abounding in roots, fruits and water. It may happen that the demons may poison the water sources and reservoirs as well as the eatables, roots and fruits on the way. Be always alert, take full care, and protect your forces from such a mishap. Neela shall look to all these arrangements. The Generals Gaya, huge like a bull, Gavay, a giant in strength, and Gavaksha, all proud and indomitable like bulls, will also remain in the vanguard. General Rishabh, with his Vahini, will march on the right flank and that powerful General Gandhamadan, who is as invincible and forceful as a scent-elephant (enrut), will take care of the left side of the army. Myself and Lakshman will ride on the shoulders of Hanuman

and Angad in the centre of the marching-forces. Jambavan and Sushena will keep the rear of the army.'

ततो वानरराजेन लक्ष्मणेन च पूजितः ।
 उवाच रामो धर्मात्मा पुनरप्यर्थकोविदः ॥ ९ ॥
 अग्रे यातु बलस्यास्य नीलो मार्गमवेक्षितुम् ।
 वृतः शतसहस्रेण वानराणां तरस्विनाम् ॥ १० ॥
 फलमूलवता नीलशीतकाननवारिणा ।
 पथा मधुमता चाशु सेनां सेनापते नय ॥ ११ ॥
 दूषयेयुर्दुरात्मानः पथि मूलफलोदकम् ।
 राक्षसाः पथि रक्षेथाः तेभ्यस्त्वं नित्यमुद्यतः ॥ १२ ॥
 गयश्च गिरिसंकाशो गवयश्च महाबलः ।
 गवाक्षश्चाग्रतो यातु गवां दृप्त इवर्षभाः ॥ १६ ॥
 यातु वानरबाहिन्या वानरः प्लवतां पतिः ।
 पालयन्दक्षिणं पार्श्वमृषभो वानरर्षभः ॥ १७ ॥
 गन्धहस्तीव दुर्धर्षस्तरस्त्री गन्धमादनः ।
 यातु वानरबाहिन्याः सव्यं पार्श्वमधिष्ठितः ॥ १८ ॥
 यास्यामि बलमध्येऽहं बलौघमभिहर्षयन् ।
 अधिरुह्य हनूमन्तमरावतमिवेश्वरः ॥ १९ ॥
 अंगदेनैव संयातु लक्ष्मणश्चान्नकोपमः ।
 सार्वभौमेन भूतेशो द्रविणाधिपतियथा ॥ २० ॥
 जाम्बवांश्च सुषेणश्च वेगदर्शां च वानरः ।
 ऋक्षराजो महाबाहुः कुक्षि रक्षन्तु ते त्रयः ॥ २१ ॥

(Valmiki Ramayana, Yudhakanda 4/9-21).

This great army of 'Vanaras' was led by the Commander Neela in a well-planned formation right up to the shores of the sea. During their marches two Generals were entrusted with the constant watch and guard of the camps. With such realistic descriptions of the marching armies as we get in Ramayana and Mahabharat, one has to assume that the Bharatiya system of army organisation had reached beyond doubt, a very high stage of development.

The next important factor in the successful strategy of war is the military camps and the supply bases. In old literature

dealing with military matters, these camps and bases were called 'Skandhawar'. The grounds recommended for pitching military camps differ in their natures according to the predominance of horses, chariots, elephants, etc., in the armies. Horses required plain grounds without rocks and thickets; chariots could not move through sandy or marshy lands; and the elephants also hated swampy as well as boggy fields; but they always required a fresh and sufficient supply of water. It became, therefore, a very hard task to choose the convenient grounds for military camps and supply bases. Mahabharat gives exhaustive instructions in regard to the choice of grounds for military camps.

The camp grounds must necessarily be of convenience to one's own armies and of inaccessible approach for the enemy. After the ground was selected, the camp was pitched in a regular square with four entrance-gates and six roads into it. The camp was generally divided into nine sections and was encircled wherever possible by tall walls, ramparts and water ditches or rock fortifications. The commander had to keep in mind that a military camp required exercise-grounds for the soldiers and the animals. The whole camp was guarded by sections in turns. Round about the military camp there used to be intentionally sprinkled forest people to reconnoitre the enemy's movements and report to the concerned officers. In the camps wine, women, gambling and sports were as a rule prohibited. It was very difficult for the enemy agents to get entrance into the camps. There was the system of pass-words which went on changing from day-to-day or by hours according to changing situations. Every military camp was provided with a medical section in which every emergency case was attended. In short, these military camps were almost self-sufficient towns on march. Mahabharat has painted a matter of fact picture of the military camp of Yudhisthir.

(Udyogaparva 152-7 to 16).

We do not propose to go into the illustrative description of the camp which on the whole does not differ in any way from any up-to-date modern pattern.

The third factor in this successful strategy is to choose one's

own battlefield. Military scientists maintained that victory depended upon the battlefields. All our writers have given their ideas and opinions in regard to the most favourable type of a battlefield to fight a successful action. The choice of battlefields differs according to the conditions and proportions of the contesting armies. What may be favourable for an open and decisive battle was totally unsuited for a delayed action or the guerilla tactics. Ancient warriors and war-lords were taught all these factors and aspects of strategy and tactics for the successful waging of a war. It will be remembered that a king being the pivot of life of a kingdom, was not allowed to rush to the battlefield. He had to remain in a safe and secured place from where he directed the action. Whenever this conventional rule was forgotten, the Hindus lost their wars.

The fourth factor which turns any war-strategy successful is the possession of strong forts and castles. Bharatiya ideas on the utility of forts and castles have been already described by us. Without, therefore, prying over the same subject, we just mention that the strength of a defence depended upon the strength of its forts. The strategy of the aggressor lay in drawing the defenders of the fort outside in the open field. To attain this objective, it was permitted to adopt any means right from corruption to treachery.

Victory was considered to be the objective of every action. In the Bharatiya political thought, there is no mincing of the purity of means. All our successful political philosophers and victorious warriors have emphatically asserted that what is good for the nation has to be achieved by all means. That is the Dharma. The military scientists, therefore, did not hesitate to commend the use of any means and tactics in reducing the forts of the enemy. In the Mauryan period we have instances of boiling oil being used to burn the enemy. If a fort could not be captured by such frightful means, the ingenious tactician went to the length of corrupting the enemy agents to betray their own people. Very interesting tactics have been recommended. When all hopes of the besieged people coming out were lost, the attackers set fire to their own camp and pretended to run away. Seeing this men in the fort would naturally come down to pursue the fleeing enemy, who would turn back

and destroy the beguiled forces. There is no end to the tactics employed in war, by ingenious experts. The forts of Lanka and Kishkindha were captured by Rama undoubtedly on the strength of the secret information which he could get from Bibhishana and Sugreeva. For this, these two were rewarded by Rama with the kingdoms of Lanka and Pampa. Some people believe that the forts and castles have lost all their strategic value which once they used to possess. Dikshitar observes in his volume: 'There is a wrong notion that is still current, namely, that these forts have lost their military value and are an anachronism since the invention of gun-powder. But the gun-powder was in use in ancient India even in very early times and still those strong-holds were recommended as safe ones. It was during the last Great War as we all know that the fortresses in Belgium offered stubborn resistance to the Germans, but for which the latter might in all probability have overwhelmed the whole of France. In fact they were decisive in arresting the progress of the Germans. Therefore to decry the value of a fort is to misjudge its merit.'

The Bharatiya military science recognised the great value of tactics in the actual waging of a war. Many a tactical blunder has been the cause of catastrophic failures. In the Atharva-Veda we get a realistic description of a tactical step taken by the Gods in their fight against the Demons. One participant in the war observes: 'Let this lighted wick full of explosive powder which I have thrown into the enemy's camp spread unbearably dirty and stinking smell and smoke there. Let the enemy be frightened out of his wits by the tearing gas and fire coming out of it. Let the devouring flames of fire, which will come out of that missile, put the enemy to flight. O Indra, may you spread your confounding trap in which the enemy will be caught. The soldiers of our enemy will be entangled in thousands and lakhs in this net of Indra, who will thereafter destroy them. This world is itself a very great (greater than anything); confounding trap or net of Indra, the darkness of which engulfs almost all the enemies.'

पूतिरज्जुरुध्मानी पतिं सेनां कृणोत्वमूम् ।

धूममग्निं पराह्वयामित्रा हृत्स्वा दधतां भयम् ॥ २ ॥

बृहते जालं बृहत इन्द्र शूर सहस्रार्धस्य शतवीर्यस्य ।

तेन शतं सहस्रमयुतं न्यर्वुदं जघान शक्रो दस्यूनामभिधाय सेनया ॥ ७ ॥

अयं लोको जालमासीच्छक्रस्य महतो महान् ।

तेनाहमिन्द्र जालेनामृस्तमसामि दधामि सर्वान् ॥ ८ ॥

(Atharva-Veda 8-8-2-7-8).

Now we come to the conventions observed by the fighting forces in those old days. We have already said that wars were classified according to their aims, namely, Dharma, Lobh and Asur. In the convention of Dharmayudha the adversary was never taken unaware. Mahabharat enumerates the rules and regulations which had to be observed in this type of fight. If the adversary had no shield, he was never attacked. The fight took place between two persons who had the same weapons. If one was a horseman, he would never think of attacking a charioteer. Hardly any poisonous weapon is reported to have been used in the long records of Bharatiya wars. Even in war the Bharatiya people observed the moral law. When an adversary was injured, he stopped to be an enemy and all care was poured on him. A Kshatriya was required to be very scrupulous in the observance of the conventions and morals of right war. It was considered to be a disgrace for a Kshatriya to stoop down or abandon the morals of his profession. A Kshatriya considered death to be preferable to an ignominious victory. It was the belief that anything that was built upon fraud and treachery, every victory that was achieved by betrayal and cheating would entail at some time a total destruction of the family and the dynasty. The kings and their commanders were everywhere noble Kshatriyas who upheld the traditions laid down by the laws of castes. And yet it has to be confessed there have been defaults on the part of even renowned warriors.

There used to be an agreed rule that the captives—men, women and girls—would be unmolested. After one year these captured prisoners were permitted to return to their homes. Even the slaves in war and the plunder of wealth were expected to be returned to the rightful owners after a lapse of one year.

Another peculiar convention which was followed deserves to be mentioned here. If a Brahman came in between two fighting forces or persons with a desire to bring about a rapprochement between them, the fight would be stopped. Both the sides would patiently listen to the words of that Brahman and arrive at a negotiated peace on the spot. If some Kshatriya defied this convention, he was disgraced by his class. This was for all purposes a safety valve in keeping the violent rage of strong men under control.

When a king achieved victory, he would return to the capital with the war-drums sounding and his bards singing the songs of success. The king would offer prayers and worship to the family deities; he would perform a sacrifice in celebration of his victory and offer large sums of money to the deserving Brahmins.

The defeated enemy was at all times treated in an honourable manner by the conquerors. The victorious king would go to the conquered country and tell the people to accept his rule. If they resisted, then only he would employ other means to bring them under control. It was never permitted to destroy the properties of the defeated people, to plunder the wealths of the captured, and occupy their territories. The utmost punishment that was accorded to the offending enemies, their kings and officers was a clean-shave of the head. Krishna condemned the Prince of Vidarbha, who dared to fight him, to shaving his head in five stripes, letting him go as a butt of ridicule. Such a disgraced person hardly opted to live. Rukmi and Jaidrath were two such persons who lived after their dishonour. All these conventions and rules of behaviour of kings with their conquered people were literally observed right up to the days of Harsha. The Chinese traveller Huan Tsang writes in his diary: 'Whenever a General is destroyed on a war-like expedition, although he is defeated and his army destroyed, he is not himself subjected to bodily punishment; only he has to exchange his soldier's dress for that of a woman, much to his shame and chagrin. So, mostly those men put themselves to death to avoid such disgrace.'

This concept of Dharma-Vijay has been misunderstood in the later period. According to Kautilya the word Dharma-Vijay was used only in pure political sense. Dharma-Vijay simply meant that once an enemy was overpowered by strength, he should not be harassed or plundered further and should be left to live with honour. On account of this word Dharma-Vijay not being properly understood, the later interpreters had been misled. It will be remembered that Ashoka was the product of Kautilyan Politics. Ashoka followed the principles laid down by the great preceptor of his grand-father Chandragupta. We must, therefore, interpret this word Dharma-Vijay, wherever it occurs in the inscriptions or the stone-pillars of Ashoka in the scientific or technical sense in which it is used in Arthashastra. Prof. Dikshitar observes: 'Before the discovery of Arthashastra and even several years after its discovery, the term Dharma-Vijay occurring in the inscriptions of Ashoka was a puzzle to Ashokan scholars, who unfortunately took for granted that the Emperor was a Buddhist and connected the term with the Buddhist Dharma and interpreted it just contrary to what it connotes. We are told by an authority that the term which occurs in the XIII Rock Edict means conquest by morality for 'conquest by armies'. Suffice it to say here that if we accept that Ashoka became a monk and gave up arms, then according to Hindu and even the Buddhist conception, he relinquished the throne and could not have been an emperor. And with complete disarmament with states of people professing different faiths and creeds, the vast empire could not be maintained even for a short period. In interpreting this term the whole edict must be taken into account. In the latter part we read according to Hultzsch's translation: 'And they (Foresters) are told of the power to (punish them) which Devanam Priya (possesses) in spite of (his) repentance in order that they may be ashamed (of their crimes) and may not be killed.' What is this power to punish and kill them except by the employment of weapons of war? What is that repentance except that he waged in Kalinga an unrighteous war involving the slaughter of innocent and that he took a vow from that day to resort only to righteous methods of war. Dharma-Vijay is a term of much political significance and

Ashoka, born and bred in the Kautilyan school of politics (there is a story Kautilya continued to be the minister of Ashoka's father also) must have followed his political injunctions. It is wrong to take all his edicts as religious edicts. They are all political in character and deserve to be re-edited and interpreted from the political stand-point of Kautilya to do justice to a very great Emperor of India, who had equal regards for all orthodox and heretic sects of his time.'

(*War in Ancient India*).

The second form of warfare was termed 'Kootayuddha' as contrasted with 'Dharmayuddha'. 'Lobha-Vijay and Asur-Vijay' also fall under 'Koota-Yuddha'. In this type of war treachery, cheating, beguiling, any and all tricks by which the enemy could be trapped and defeated were used. The word 'Koota-Yuddha' appears very early in the Atharva-Veda. In one place we are told:

'I have thrown this trap of death which you can never evade. This trap will destroy the enemy.'

इम उप्ता मृत्युपाशा यानाक्रम्य न मुच्यसे ।

अमुष्या हन्तु सेनाया इदं कूटं सहस्रशः ॥

(Atharva-Veda 8-8-16).

This manner of warfare was also called Chitrayuddha, Maya-Yuddha or 'Aprakash' warfare. Shukracharya has elaborated different tactics and traps employed to bring about the total destruction and defeat of the enemy. Without going into those wily tricks recommended by war authorities, we mention here the general idea that in this type of dark warfare all human sense or moral and ethical considerations were completely brushed aside for accomplishing the object, namely, the victory. There was no hesitation in employing any type of cruel, immoral or fraudulent means. It may appear a bit surprising that such great authors and political philosophers like Valmiki and Shukracharya who have always upheld the values of ethics should admit this type of war and the dark means to win it as legitimate. Valmiki tells us that when the object is victory and when this type of war-strategy is adopted, all means may be adopted. Shukraniti reiterates the same propo-

sition by saying that 'when the victory is in doubt, there is no objection in adopting all means, to destroy the enemy.'

न युद्धं कूटसदृशं नाशनं बलवद्विरोः ॥ ३६२ ॥

प्रफुल्लवदनेनैव तथा कोमलया गिरा ।

अङ्गीकृतापराधेन सेवादानं नतिस्तवैः ॥ ३६५ ॥

जलान्नतृणसंरोधैः शत्रून्संपीड्य यत्नतः ।

पुरस्ताद्विषमे देशे पश्चात् हन्यात्तु वेगवान् ॥ ३७० ॥

कूटस्वर्णमहादानैर्भेदयित्वा द्विषद्बलम् ।

नित्यविस्रब्धसंघुप्तं प्रजागरकृतश्रमम् ॥ ३७१ ॥

विलोभ्यापि परानीकमप्रमत्तो विनाशयेत् ॥ ३७२ ॥

क्षणं युद्धाय सज्जेत क्षणं चापसरेत् पुनः ।

अकस्मान्निपतेत् दूरात् दस्युवत् परितस्सदा ॥ ३७४ ॥

(Shukraniti 4-1-23-24).

Having admitted these means and methods for the winning of victory as plausible in 'Koota Yuddha', our old militarists did not hesitate to suggest the use of poison and arson or secret missiles for taking the enemy by surprise. It is on that account that such a warfare was called 'devilish' or the 'asuri' war. Treachery was the key-note in this type of war. If we go to describe the ingenious ways and means adopted in old times for the achievement of victory that may turn out to be a blood-curdling narrative. Having experienced how devilish man could be as we have seen in the last two World Wars, we should not imagine that the fighting men were in any way better in those ancient days than in the modern times. Atharva-Veda contains a substantial compilation of all such devilish tricks and treacherous traps which could be used for an easy achievement of victory over a somewhat simpler and weaker enemy. We need not go deep into those descriptions in which Atharva-Veda tells us of the 100 ways of trapping and destroying the enemy. Kautilya's Arthashastra which is a perfect culmination of all the good and bad things of the Aryan policy and political philosophy has also enumerated exhaustively these different ways of striking at and crushing the enemy.

The power of a State which could use these two types of warfare were necessarily required to be well acquainted in the science of politics and diplomacy. 'Diplomacy' had a special term 'Nyaya' in Sanskrit and the king was expected to know every detail of the labyrinth of diplomacy. For the addage was: 'One skilled in diplomacy wins the world.'

(नयज्ञः पृथिवीं जयति)

Diplomacy in those days was divided into six aspects called 'Sandhi', 'Vigrah', 'Yan', 'Asan', 'Ashray' and 'Dwaidhibhava'. These six facets of diplomacy were universally known in those ancient times and are still recognised as good methods through which the interests of a State are guarded or advanced.

(1) The first of these is 'Sandhi' which is a very simple idea. A State when faced with a more powerful adversary must try to negotiate a peaceful pact to survive. It never pays to oppose the mighty. It is, therefore, advised that small States should live in alliances with the mightier ones. The alliances may be temporary when they are called 'Kal Sandhi', or long-standing which were known as 'Sthavar Sandhi' (permanent alliance). The alliances were also further categorised according to the substance and terms of concession, whether it was a contribution of gold, or a surrender of a piece of land. It may be that a small State may bargain to live by offering to perform some service for a stronger ally, etc. Such were different types of 'Sandhis'.

(2) The second was 'Vigrah' which meant a conflict with either a stronger or a weaker enemy. The conflict might have been caused over a woman, over a slice of land, over some dishonour of the nation or on account of harbouring and helping the enemy and many more reasons. In all such cases when a nation had to face another, Kautilya advised, as far as could be possible the root of discontent should be resolved by diplomacy. Resort to weapons should be the last remedy to solve the conflict.

(3) 'Yan' is the third facet of diplomacy which simply means that taking into consideration all the points the fighting forces should be marched to the battlefield.

(4) The fourth is called 'Asan'. Asan is 'neutrality' in

modern terminology. This diplomatic move was of course considered practicable only for a strong State. It was generally believed that a weak nation could not keep itself neutral. A weak nation had always to side with the strong as it had no chance of survival between two fighting might.

(5) 'Ashray' is a device resorted to by diplomats of ancient times as well as of modern days in trying to save one's own nation behind the cover of some other stronger State. In this device there was always the risk that the stronger nation which gave cover and protection was likely to swallow itself the smaller ones.

(6) The sixth and the last trick of diplomats was the well-known practice of duplicity or double-dealing adopted since ancient days. It was not possible for a nation of moderate strength to fight more than one enemy at a time. In such an eventuality the diplomats kept all other friends silent or guessing by adopting an equivocal attitude until the enemy with whom the nation was at war was vanquished.

These six different facets of the art of diplomacy were made effective and fruitful by the famous fourfold devices called: 'Sam', 'Dan', 'Bhed' and 'Dand'. It is redundant to define and describe these four means which are a matter of common knowledge. All these four are in some form or variation practised right up to the present day, not only by this country alone but by all other nations and peoples. We have mentioned these only to show that the ancient Bharatiyas had discovered all possible means to achieve particular ends much before so many modern nations were born. Dr. Burns observes in his volume 'War': 'Diplomacy is the name for a method of negotiation, pursuasion and conciliation for promoting the common interests of different nations and adjusting those interests which are opposed..... Without the diplomatic system, war would be more frequent than it is. Behind the diplomatic system, however, lie the preparations for war; and in certain forms of policy, the threat of war is used as an instrument of diplomacy. (Pages 81-83).

It will be noted that negotiation, pursuasion, conciliation and threat of war were all in universal practice in ancient times too. When it is remembered that the Purohit, Vasishtha

could accomplish such a miracle of a victory for his king Sudasa against the confederation of 10 mighty kings, it will be admitted that he must have had used all possible devices and diplomacy. Rig-Veda tells us that the victory of Vasishta was as miraculous as to say that 'a lamb had defeated a lion'. (Rig-Veda 7-18-17). If these are not the evidences of the excellent development of diplomacy, the art of war, and the evolution of the science of war, by the Bharatiya people, we fail to understand what else could be.

If all these means, strategies and tactics—fair and foul—moralistic or immoral have been recognised and resorted to as has been shown above, one may ask what was the dominant motive or the underlying principle of the Bharatiya war aims and objectives? Why did they embark upon so many aggressive wars if not with the ambition to conquer the world by any and all means, fair and violent? If it was so, what is the difference between the much-applauded ideal Bharatiya heroes and the much denounced conquerors of the world like Changish-Khan, Temoor, and a horde of such other inhuman Titans? From the perusal of the means and method commended by Kautilya for the achievement of victory, one may rightly infer that Kautilya was as wily as Machiavelli. If all that has been said in Atharva-Veda, were the common practices of the Vedic nation, then that nation stands to be condemned as brutish and primitive.

It has to be asserted without any fear of contradiction rather with a sense of pride that Kautilya's Arthashastra is perfection *par excellence* of the Bharatiya policy and political philosophy or in realisation of the Vedic concept of a nation. Kautilya has indeed described all types of wars and the devilish means and devices of diplomacy but nowhere has he ever shown a first preference to these over the moral and human ways. The special circumstances in which this particular thesis of the nation's wily diplomacy was revealed and had to be resorted to has to be understood. Kautilya holds the Vedic nation above everything. In his point of view, whatever was harmful and disgraceful to the concepts of the Vedic nation was immoral, irreligious and sinful. He, therefore, upheld the principle that for the destruction of all the elements

and agents which were suicidal to the nation's honour, solidarity, safety and to the survival and continuity of the Vedic culture and civilisation everything was fair and moral. There is no doubt that he followed the great principle 'the end justifies the means'. But having said this, we have to distinguish Kautilya from Machiavelli who also has said the same thing almost in the same words. Kautilya observes: 'When a king has enough strength and means to put down his enemy, he should never resort to the wily treacherous tricks.'

न त्वेव विद्यमाने पराक्रमे अग्निमवसृजेत् ।

अप्रतिसंख्यातप्राणिधान्यपशुहिरण्यकुप्यक्षयकरः ।

चातुर्वर्ण्यरक्षार्थं औपनिषदिकम् अधर्मेषु प्रयुज्जीत ॥

In the days of Kautilya this nation of a unique social evolution had become a target of attacks of foreigners from outside and was at the same time being disintegrated by the revolt of some sections from within which was contained by the followers of Mahavir and Buddha who had indeed shaken for a time the steel-frame of the Vedic society. Under the circumstance, the first and the foremost ambition of Kautilya was not merely to save the State but to defend the very culture and civilisation which the Vedic people had evolved. In this epic struggle Kautilya was confronted by foreign and local elements who were not only anti-Vedic and wily but had never learnt or exhibited any scruples about morals and ethics. Had he not dealt with the enemies of the nation in the manner he did, possibly he would have met with the same sorry fate which about a millennium and half after Prithviraj Ghauhan had to suffer. Having accomplished his grand design, namely, of stabilising the Vedic faith and firmly establishing a rule which was expected to defend and advance it, Kautilya, as the legend goes, retired to his seclusion for the worship and study of Vedas. In that lies the greatness. Nothing that he did was not for the Vedic faith and the Aryan civilisation.

The Hindu principle and policy in regard to the morals in the war have been very clearly defined, understood and followed since the Rig-Vedic times up to the last traditional monarchy in an unambiguous manner. There is never any doubt or confusion about the policy and the principle in regard

to the behaviour of the State against the enemy. Bharavi, one of our great literary figures has in very lucid lines told us, 'those simpletons who do not behave *tit for tat*, in shrewd and cunning manner with wily opponents meet with a total defeat in the end.' Kautilya who weighed the moral and the immoral in the balance of the Vedic concepts, has also reiterated the same proposition. Mahabharat tells us in Shanti Parva: 'If the enemy adopted immoral and wicked means, we are compelled to fight the enemy in the same manner. No one can fight and succeed with moral ways and means against an opponent who is wily and machiavellian.'

This practical policy adopted by supermen and commended by immortal teachings and philosophers has been indeed based upon the first lesson which the Bharatiya ancestors had laid down in the Rig-Veda. The Rig-Vedic poet says: 'We shall crush our enemies with all the means at our disposal. But those who make friends with us, we shall also be friendly.'

अस्माकेभिर्वृभिर्वयं सासहयाम पृतन्यतो ।

वनुयामवनुष्यतः नभन्ताम् अन्यके समे ॥

(Rig-Veda 8-40-7).

In short, this has been the underlying principle of Hindu political philosophy since the Rig-Vedic days. But it has been always relative, responsive and never an absolute thought. The principle has come from the battlefield to the common life in the proverb, 'Remove the thorn with a thorn'. Because this policy was followed by so many of the later Hindu heroes, they could survive and preserve their culture and civilisation against all odds and might of the aggressors who had never recognised any moral or scruples in war. The instinct of self-preservation which is the most natural and inherent characteristic of animals including men is at the root of the evolution of the war-policy of Hindus.

There had never been any confusion regarding the conflict of duty and moral in the minds of the successful Hindu heroes. Those who entertained such a dilemma were lost and defeated in the conflicts of life. The Bharatiya philosophy in this regard has always been sober, inspired by the motive of live and let live.

CHAPTER XXVIII

THE CASTE SYSTEM AND PROFESSIONS

THE one verse which stands out as the supreme expression of the aspirations of Vedic people is the famous Mantra in the Atharva-Veda, which begins with 'Aabrahman'.

आब्रह्मन्

We consider this to be the National Anthem of the Vedic people. It gives in brave words a complete idea of the very essence and character, the substance and spirit of the nation as well as places before the community the ambition for which they should strive. This verse has in it a meaningful sentence:

भोगक्षेमो नः कल्पताम् ।

'Let our "Yoga and Kshema" welfare be accomplished.' In this preposition the word 'Yoga' means 'acquisition' and 'Kshema' its proper utilisation, preservation, security, etc. 'Yoga-Kshema', if analysed in a scientific manner, is at the root of the whole idea of modern economics. A social structure, if it is to be stable and conducive to general welfare must depend upon a very sound and solid foundation of social economics. This economic foundation must be complete without any seeds of conflict between the different classes constituting the community. The Bharatiya social philosophers gave a very serious thought to the basic principles which contributed to the evolution of an unshakable structure of a healthy society. It is not that they ignored economics while planning the social system of the Hindus; rather they gave a full consideration to the vital role of economics in building a vigorous society, as much as they did to the concepts of 'Dharma and Niti'—the law and morals—if at all unlike the Bharatiya view, these could be taught as separable. In fact the foundation of the social system evolved by the Hindu sociologists and law-givers has been fabricated and re-enforced with a perfect inseparable mixture of ethics and economics. Any impartial critic who

looks into and studies the evolution of the Hindu society which has survived for millenniums witnessing the rise and decline of so many ancient nations will have to confess that it was a miracle of achievement in which economics had never been overlooked. At the base and source of this long and healthy life of the Hindu society appearing almost eternal lies the unshakable economic steel-frame which the Bharatiya architects had devised, for it. Meredith Tausen writing about the economic ideology of the Hindu society built on the foundation of the fourfold division and the caste system observes: 'I firmly believe caste to be a marvellous discovery; a form of socialism which, through ages, has protected Hindu society from the worst of industrial and competitive life. It is an automatic poor-law to begin with, and the strongest form of trade union.'

All the Western scholars who have made a comparative study of this unique social system evolved by the Hindus have given their unanimous verdict about the invaluable achievements of the caste system. Sir George Birdwood observes: 'We trace there the bright outlines of self-contained, self-dependent, symmetrical and perfectly harmonious industrial economy deeply rooted in the popular conviction of its divine character and protected through every political and commercial vicissitudes. Such an ideal social order we should have held impossible of realisation, but that it continues to exist and to afford us, in the living results of its daily operations in India. A proof of the superiority, in so many unsuspected ways of that hieratic civilisation of antiquity over the secular joyless and self-destructive modern civilisations of the West.'

It would not be out of place to quote one great authority in social philosophy. Justice Woodroff observes: 'Caste system is democratic in the truest sense of the term: (1) It insists on the spirituality and equality of all men. (2) It makes for individuality which is attained not through an escape from limitations but through the willing acceptance of obligations. (3) It points out that all work is socially useful and economically equally important. (4) It recognises that while men are all unequal in capacity it insists that they have the liberty to

contribute to human achievement as far as their capacity goes. (5) The essence of democracy is consideration for others. Freedom for individual means restriction on absolute power. No one class can make unlimited claims. (6) The general tendency of men to strive to the summit is due to the impression that the position at the top is one of pleasure, profit and power. But in the Hindu scheme, life becomes more difficult as we rise higher.'

The Western societies and States have had to go through a number of experiments of economic structures and schemes in the last two centuries. These chapters of Western history are all red with streams of blood shed by revolutions clamouring for changes in the economic structures and social systems. From absolute monarchy to Individualism, Socialism, Anarchism, Communism, Fascism, Nazism, Guild systems and what not, all these are changing patterns, many of which have been tried and thrown into the dust-bins as utterly fruitless failures and the few others which are in the crucible may soon be condemned to the same fate, as unworthy of human kind. It is astonishing that none of these economic schemes and political patterns tried by the Western societies at the instance of very highly applauded geniuses in the last two centuries could survive or be worked out successfully even for a century. Let us ask what is the reason of the failure of so many grand designs and patterns of the Western Society?

If we analyse the causes which brought over the miscarriage of these patterns and schemes, we shall discover that none of the Western social thinkers have been able to produce a balance between the rights of an individual and the restraints on his desires for happiness. It is the want of equilibrium between these two factors which seems to us to be the most potent cause of the failure of these ideologies. It is also realised now that all these economic systems and political patterns were tried by force and experimented under threats and fears of punishment and never for any natural love or devotion to the ideology. No State nor any social philosophy has ever succeeded in imbibing a devotion and love much less a sense of duty for a particular economic pattern in the minds of its

people. It was tyranny of those in power and the helplessness of the governed that gave a chance for a particular scheme to be tried out. Contrasted with this the Bharatiya social system stands out completely different and distinct in its character, evolution and results. It will be admitted that the pride and attachment of the Bharatiya people to their economic pattern had been the natural result of its intrinsic merit and not because it promised to fulfil this or that passion of different classes of the society. It is a well recognised fact that there has never been any competition or strife between the different classes in the matter of their professions. On the other hand, there has been a miracle of co-operation between the four classes and innumerable castes practising different professions and acting as complementary to each other, for the common welfare of the whole society. This unique feature of the Hindu social system in which by its very character and well thought-out provisions and prohibitions the seeds of class competition could in no imaginary possibilities find any roots, nor were ever allowed to grow if by some accident or inadvertance they were dropped in, has never been witnessed in any of the social patterns of the West.

Regarding the unquestionable fidelity of the masses literally for milleniums to a social system arranged in our classes and many castes, it is amazing to note, that it was inspired by an inherent faith. Unlike any other social pattern which had to be put into force by the authority of the State, the Hindu social system has been accepted by the masses as a 'divine dispensation' with love and faith as duty. This particular aspect of the devotion of Bharatiya people to their unique social system and the effect of it on their social evolution deserves to be studied seriously.

The second virtue of the economic pattern of the Hindu social system is that it has given equal attention to the subjects of enjoyment and happiness as much as to the object and motives of the same. It had been the anxiety of these planners not merely to give a blue print but to see that it worked successfully in practical life. Thoughtful experiments over hundreds of years and requisite modifications and adjust-

ments in the pattern in the light of experience to suit the exigencies had produced a perfectness in the system as well as in the society which was built upon it. It is, therefore, necessary to look first to the foundation of this system of the Hindus before we turn to the structure and strength of their economic architecture.

Before we enter into the mansion of Bharatiya social system, it will be profitable to note a few technical terms which have a distinct meaning and propriety.

In the Bharatiya terminology 'Arthashastra' meant the whole polity. What we now understand by 'Arthashastra' or the science of Economics was called 'Varta' in old times. The Vedic and later Hindu social philosophers never commended, or recognised with any regard a State which was devoid of a sound economic base. It was realised all over that the finest culture and civilisation and a very high order of religious thought and philosophy may well decay and die out, if they were not raised on sound economic foundations. Religion and culture do not grow and flower on empty stomachs. Having understood this basic concept for a healthy growth of the society, the Bharatiya philosophers admitted economics as the fundamental consideration in the social order. The maxim which impressed this undeniable universal truth on the people's minds in those times was 'economics is the very foundation of civil life'.

वार्तामूलोद्ययलोकः

The institution of State had therefore to provide for the proper growth of the different factors which build the economics of society. Agriculture, industry, commerce, arts, crafts and the trade were the different elements which were generally considered to be the factors of the economics in those times. It will be remembered that the head of a State, namely, the king, was considered to be the protector of the social order. In Rig-Veda he has been called 'Janasya-Gopah' meaning, the protector of the society. In this idea of 'protection of the social order' emphasis was not merely on the physical protection from some external aggression but mainly on the main-

tenance of the social order in any conflict between the professions and avocations of classes and communities. This was considered to be one of the primary functions of the king, namely, the maintenance of the social equilibrium. Manusmriti gives a very serious thought to this function of the king who has been charged specifically with the task of looking to and enforcing the proper adherence by different classes to the professions assigned to them. The king was authorised to confiscate all wealth, even to banish a person who encroached upon the functions and professions of another class with the selfish motive of earning higher profits. It was a wise and well recognised principle that no individual of one class could take up a profession or a job which was prescribed for a different class. An act of such a violation was considered to be tantamount to a social sin deserving social boycott and ex-communication. Gita expressly lays down that an individual was bound by the duty and functions of his class in which only he should find peace and prosperity, for it was always dangerous and sinful to encroach upon the rights and functions of some other class. This social adjustment was the result of a scientific economic thought evolved by ancient Bharatiya sociologists.

There should be no doubt that the steel-frame of the Bharatiya society was sound from the view-point of the science of economics. Even in those ancient days, the basic occupations and resources of life were agriculture, cattle-breeding and trade. It was in the scientific and practical arrangement of these occupations and trades and their thoughtful distribution in the different sections of the society which had come to be evolved into four classes in order to realise the most effective and fruitful results of common weal by co-operation of all without any conflict, wherein lies the genius of our ancient sociologists. The king who looked to the maintenance of this social order was in fact a later institution. In very remote times, it is inferred from some clear expressions in the Vedas, there were no classes and castes. The whole society was a classless one. It was with the passage of time and the complex of life that conflicts began to arise. The social philo-

sophers, having studied the causes of these conflicts devised this most miraculous solution of a social order based upon the four-fold arrangement of the whole mass of people with safe and assured employment to all without any fear of competition or conflict in life. The king who failed in maintaining the equilibrium was accused of being a 'thief and sinner'. The Mahabharat exhorts the king to be 'as alert and careful of the welfare of the subjects as a pregnant woman is of the baby in her womb.'

भवितव्यं सदा राजा गर्भिणी सहधर्मिणा ।

The king who did not pay attention to this his function came in trouble and many-a-time was over-thrown by the people.

The Atharva-Veda expressly says: 'O, king, you are sitting in such a high place of authority that we want you to distribute the wealth equally and impartially amongst your subjects.'

(Atharva-Veda 3-4-2).

‘वर्ष्मन् राष्ट्रस्य ककुदि श्रयस्व ततो न उग्रो विभजा वसूनि ॥’

In another place the king is assured that 'all the gods and dieties will back him if he performed with devotion and determination his function of right distribution of wealth amongst his subjects.'

‘अश्विना त्वाग्रे मित्रावरुणोभा विश्वेदेवा मरुतस्त्वा हवयन्तु ।

अथा मनो वसुदेवाय कृणुष्व ततो न उग्रो वि भजा वसूनि ॥ ४ ॥

This is enough to indicate how high was the sense of equity and impartiality in the minds of the kings and the social philosophers who gave the lead to the nation. That famous verse in the Chhandogya Upanishad has also a bearing upon the economic conditions of the society. The king Ashavapati declares that there were 'no thieves in his kingdom, no misers, nor any beggars.'

Such a condition can exist only in a State of plenty and prosperity. If such a high economic prosperity existed in those early times it has to be presumed that the leaders of the society must have strived hard to bring about the happy condi-

tions. It could certainly not be the result of mere accident or inadvertance.

Now, before we go to the scheme by which the wealth was divided equitably to maintain an easy equilibrium between different sections of the society, it would be proper to look to, first to the wealth-producing occupations and trades.

The wealth of the Vedic nation was primarily the product of the mother earth, the breeding of cattle and thirdly the different trades and crafts. Dr. Ketkar while speaking about the state of civilisation and prosperity of the Vedic people observes: 'This could be inferred from two factors. The one evidence to show the high degree of civilisation was the Vedic words and actual references; and the second was the legends bearing out the rich history and legacy of the people. It is unfortunate that there is no other kind of actual evidence available to tell us about the prosperity of the Vedic nation.' Let us therefore look to the words revealing the wealth in the Vedic age.

The Vedic people priced gold as the most valuable metal. Gold was called 'Hiranya' in the Vedas. There is evidence to show that gold was not only collected from the basins of rivers like Sindhu which was called the 'golden river' but was dug out from the womb of the mother earth. In Rig-Veda one poet while praising Ashvins observes: 'As they dig out the hoard of gold, so did you restore the Sun to us.'

(Rig-Veda 1-117-5).

सुसुष्मांसं न निर्ऋतेरुपस्थे सूर्यं न दद्या तमसि क्षियन्तम् ।

शुभे रुक्मं न दर्शतं निखातं उत् ऊपथुरश्विना वंदनाय ॥

Gold was a very covetable metal which the Vedic Aryas loved. The rich patrons gave heaps of gold as gifts. Gold ornaments to adorn necks, chests and arms as well as ears have been described in the Vedic literature. In rich houses even the utensils for the performance of sacrifices were made of gold. There are references to the weights of gold, which nearly indicate that some sort of gold currency must have been in vogue in those days. The Taittirīya mentions a measure of gold called 'Ashtaprut'.

It should be noted here that the Vedic Aryas knew the process how to recover gold from impure ores. In the hymn on the Mother earth the Atharva-Veda calls her as 'Vasudhani' and 'Hiranyavaksha'. The word 'Vasudhani' means mines of jewels and precious stones. 'Hiranyavaksha' is more expressive of a gold mine. The word 'Hiranyavaksha' cannot be interpreted in any other sense except to mean the 'earth in whose breasts there is gold', i.e., a gold mine.

In the Shathpath Brahman we are informed that gold was recovered from iron-ore. That only meant that gold was the product of some impure ore resembling iron. Megasthenes, as early as the third century before Christ records his belief that 'Bharat was a land of gold.'

Besides gold, all types of precious stones, pearls and cloth with golden thread are mentioned in the Rig-Veda. Bronze, lead, silver, iron and zinc are other metals which are a number of times referred to in Vedic hymns. There is a special word 'Bahudhmatam' (बहुध्मातम्) for the process of heating an ore to a temperature where pure metal could be secured. Thus it may be a surprising but an indisputable truth that the Vedic people knew all the precious metals and stones which are even to this day considered to hold the market and command popularity.

The most important avocation of life in those days was of course agriculture and cattle-breeding. This country even in the 20th century remains to be primarily dependent upon the cultivation of the soil. Let us, therefore, examine the conditions of agriculture in the Vedic times.

The Rig-Veda refers to this all common occupation of the masses in numerous passages. In one place the poet advises: 'May you not indulge in gambling, stick to the art of agriculture, you will then reap a good harvest and gain respect in the society. In agriculture you will be able to collect cows and without doubt you will get a wife as your life's partner. I myself have got this experience.'

(Rig-Veda 10-34-30).

अक्षैर्मा दीव्यः कृषिमित् कृषस्व वित्ते रमस्व बहुमन्यमानः ।

तत्र गावः कितव तत्र जाया तत् मे विचष्टे सवितायमर्यः ॥ १३ ॥

If we look to the words which signify the instruments and means of agriculture, it will be astonishing to find that almost every implement and idea have been mentioned in the Vedic literature. 'Ashtra' (whip), 'Ahavah' (well), 'Kinashah (ploughman), 'Krish' (to plough), 'Krishi' (agriculture and cultivation), 'Kshetra' (field), 'Kshetrapati' (the owner of the field), 'Khalam' (the barnyard), 'Fala' (blade of the plough), 'Yuga' (the yoke of the plough)—'Yoke'—is derived from Sanskrit 'Yoga'), 'Langlam' means the plough, 'Vapeta'—the sowing operation, 'Varatra'—the reins, 'Vrajam'—the cow-pen, 'Shrushthi'—the harvest, 'Sira'—the plough, 'Sruni'—a Scyth, etc., etc. These words are in use today in agriculture in this country.

There are two other words 'Urvara' and 'Kshetra' in the Rig-Veda. The first means the arable or cultivable land. There is also a special word to denote a fertile field and distinguish it from uncultivable land. There is sufficient ground to believe that the Vedic people also knew the method of irrigation. A reference from Rig-Veda suggests that 'water was taken to the fields by dugout channels.' (Rig-Veda 7-49-2). In Atharva-Veda, of course, without doubt channels and canals are mentioned. The fields were measured and the right of ownership was recognised.

One lady Apala praises God Indra: 'O, Lord, may you make the following three rich, my father's head, his ploughed field, and this my womb!' (Rig-Veda 8-80-5-6).

इमानि त्रीणि विष्टया तानि इन्द्र वि रोहय ।

शिरस्तस्य उर्वराम् अदिदं मे उपोदरे ॥ ५ ॥

असौ च या नः उर्वरा आत् इमां तन्वं मम ।

अथो ततस्य यत् शिरः सवां ता रोमशा कृषि ॥ ६ ॥

It can be safely inferred from this witty and meaningful reference that a field was considered as much the subject of individual ownership as the head of a man was. It has only to be guessed that the father had a bald head and the loving daughter prays for a rich crop of hair on his head as well as a good crop of corn in the ploughed field and a child on her lap. The Vedic agriculturists loved his field as well and as much as his children. He went 'to the field with his plough

yoked on the humps of his bullocks'. He then 'worked with the plough in the field and made the whole land very loose and soft'. Next he made 'furrows in the field to sow the seeds when the rains came as expected and then put the seeds into the field'. It is very amusing to note that much like the present time, the Vedic agriculturists also had to keep their eyes turned to the sky in expectation of the rainfall. If the rains were late, he used to offer prayers to his dieties 'to bless his field with sweet water'. If the rains came in plenty, the 'fields yielded rich harvest'. The harvest was then collected. The scythes were used to cut the crop. The harvest was then taken to the barn-yard where the chaff was separated from the corn. The corn was then stored into big barns.

This is the description of the whole process of Vedic agriculture right from the preparation of the field to the stocking of the corn. We have picked up this description from different hymns from the Rig-Veda to show that there has not been any change in the methods of agricultural operations in the last thousands of years. All these operations are found exactly described. Now we shall consider how much was agriculture the major resource of life in the Vedic days. Here are some lovely and realistic pieces from Atharva-Veda revealing the faith and attitude of Vedic people:

A master poet of Atharva-Veda sings: 'Wise men who believe in the order of gods and the productive potency of Mother earth, always take to the plough to produce corn so that people should live in happiness. O, you people, prepare your ploughs, run your ploughs through the fields rightly and then put the seeds. May there be a rich crop so that the harvest to be collected will be in plenty. Do not forget that the blade of your plough must be of very strong and sharp iron and there should be a handle to turn the plough. Only with such a handle you can plough the field effectively. Is it not this plough which becomes almost the prop of all our cows and bullocks, the sheep and goats, the horses and mules, and men and women? It is indeed with the plough that we can collect grass for the cattle and corn for men. Our only anxiety is that Lord Indra should send

enough showers of rain in the fields which we keep ready to receive them. We also pray that God Sun should shine well and nourish the essence in the corn. May this our land produce ripe and rich corn from year to year.'

'That the plough should work well in the field, the husbandman must drive the bullocks from the back. It is also necessary that our oblations to the fire should please the Lord Sun and Wind to confer on us rich and ripe fruit, as well as the various types of herbs. May our bulls and cattle be always healthy and happy. Of course, our fellowmen must get their share of happiness. Take care that the bullocks are fed well and use the whip only when necessary. May Lord Wind and Sun accept my oblations and be pleased to send in showers of water which are stored in the skies. We are devoted to this (mother) earth because we know fully well that it is she that confers all blessings and prosperity on us. O (mother) land, may you bless us with fine corn, rich honey and nourish us with ghee.' (Atharva-Veda 3-17, 1-9).

सीरा युज्जन्ति कवयो युगा वि तन्वते पृथक् धीरा देवेषु सुन्नयौ ॥ १ ॥

युनक्त सीरा वि युगा तनोत कृते योनौ वपतेह बीजम् ।

विराजः श्रुष्टिः सभरा असन्नो नेदीय इत् सृण्यः पक्वमा यवन् ॥ २ ॥

लाङ्गलं पवीरवत् सुशीमं सोमसत्सर ।

उद्विद्रपतु गामवि प्रस्थावद् रथवाहनं पीबरीं च प्रफर्ष्यम् ॥ ३ ॥

इन्द्रः सीतां नि गृह्णातु तां पूषाभि रक्षतु ।

सा नः पयस्वती दुहामुत्तरामुत्तरां समाम् ॥ ४ ॥

शुनं सुफाला वि तुदन्तु भूमिं शुनं कीनाशा अनु यन्तु वाहान् ।

शुनासीरा हविषा तोशमाना सुपिप्पला ओषधीः कर्तमस्मै ॥ ५ ॥

शुनं वाहाः शुनं नरः शुनं कृषतु लाङ्गलम् ।

शुनं वरत्रा बध्यन्तां शुनमग्न्यामुदिज्ञय ॥ ६ ॥

शुनासीरेह स्म मे जुषेयाम् ।

यद् दिवि चक्रथुः पयस्तेनेमामुप सिञ्चतम् ॥ ७ ॥

सीते वन्दामहे त्वार्वाची शुभगे भव ।

यथा नः सुमना असौ यथा नः सुफला भुवः ॥ ८ ॥

घृतेय सीता मधुना समक्ता विश्वेदेवैरनुमता मरुद्भिः ।

सा नः सीते पयसाभ्याववृत्स्वोर्जस्वती घृतवत् पिन्वमाना ॥ ९ ॥

'It is the bullocks and the husbandmen who move on their legs in the field and with hard labour day in and day after (that bring for us a happy day). See that how the bull and the man look proud and pleased in their fields.'

(Atharva-Veda 4-11-10).

पङ्क्तिः सेदिमवकामन्निरां जङ्घामिहृत्विदन् ।

श्रमेणानड्वान्कीलालं कीनाशश्चामि गच्छतः ॥ १० ॥

Complementary to agriculture, cattle-breeding, with special attention to cow and her progeny, was an engaging occupation of the Vedic people. The cow was and is to this day considered to be a point of national honour. Protection of the cow was regarded as the most sacred duty of a king and Kshatriya. The killing of a cow or an animal of her kind was considered to be a national insult to recompense which kings and communities sacrificed their lives. From the Vedic times, the cow has been the symbol of sacredness only next to that of the mother. The Vedic Aryas have always held the cow above every other earthly thing and praised her as the mother. Vedic sentiment in regard to the mother-cow has been very finely expressed in a passage from the Atharva-Veda. A poet says: 'Let the cow come to our homes and we shall be happy. If the cow-pens are full, the homes are full of joy. Let the cows yield large progeny so that our homes will be full with milk and milk products. God Almighty has created the cow in order to make our sacrifices effective. Let not the species of cow be ever lost in our nation. No thieves can steal away cow from our country. No person can think of injuring or harassing the cow. It is the milk and the ghee with which our sacrifices become complete. The cow and her protector are always happy. The horse may be a bigger animal but can never be compared to a cow in utility. Our cows have never the occasion to go to the kitchens. (This means that cow's beef was excluded from human consumption). Cows roam about in our country without any fear as they have protectors everywhere. Indeed the cow is the richest type of wealth in our life. Cow-milk is the richest kind of food in nourishment and value. We consider the cows and bullocks as a sign of

our prosperity. Recognising this, we always try to rear good species of cows and bullocks. It is a well-known fact that the cow's milk makes even the diseased person strong and capable. Those who suffer from 'Pandu' (Jaundice) disease can also recover by living on cow's milk and appear handsome as well as lustrous. It is our experience that cows bellowing spreads a sense of pleasure in our homes. The cows make our homes auspicious. It is on that account that praise of cows is sung in every assembly and conference. May the cows of our country get good breed and progeny. May they never be in want of good grass and pure drinking water. May the cows never have the misfortune to be taken away by thieves and cattle-lifters. May the cows be well defended in this nation.'

(Atharva-Veda 4-21, 1 to 7)

आ गावो अग्मन्नुत भद्रमकन्त्सीदन्तु गोष्ठे रणयन्त्वस्मे । प्रजावतीः
 पुरुषा इह स्युरिन्द्राय पूर्वोरुषसो दुहानाः ॥ १ ॥ न ता नशन्ति न दमाति तत्करो
 नासामामित्रो व्यधिरा दधर्षति । देवांश्च याभिर्यजते ददाति च ज्योगिताभिः सचते
 गोपतिः सह ॥ ३ ॥ न ता अर्वा रेणुककाटोऽश्नुते न संस्कृतत्रमुप यन्ति ता अभि ।
 उरु गायमभयं तस्य ता अनु गावौ मर्तस्य वि चरन्ति यज्वनः ॥ ४ ॥ गावो भगो गाव
 इन्द्रो म इच्छाद्गावः सोमस्य प्रथमस्य भक्षः । इमा या गावः स जनास इन्द्रः इच्छामि
 हृदा मनसा चिदिन्द्रम् ॥ ५ ॥ यूयं गावो मेदयथा कृशं चिदश्रीरं चित्कृणुथा सुप्रतीकम् ।
 भद्रं गृहं कृणुथ भद्रवाचो बृहद्वो वय उच्यते सभासु ॥ ६ ॥ प्रजावतीः स्यूवसे रुशंतीः
 शुद्धा अपः सुप्रपाणे पिबंतीः । मा व स्तेन ईशत माघशंसः परि वो रुद्रस्य
 हेतिर्वृणक्तु ॥ ७ ॥

The above hymn speaks how much regard the Vedic Aryas had for their most sacred animal—the cow. It also informs us of the great care and anxiety Vedic people must have taken in the protection as well as the rearing up and maintenance of the cow and her family. Details of arrangements in the cow-pens are mentioned in some verses in Atharva-Veda:

'The cow-pen should always be spacious and very clean. Water which is placed before the cows for drinking purposes must be kept pure for drinking. It is necessary to pay due attention to the insemination of the cows so that they may yield fine progeny of good breed. You must love the cow so much as to serve her with substantial grub by the day time.

In such fully provided cow-pens good, healthy cows of nice breed which are capable of giving ample nectar-like milk should be bred. Only such a well-cared cow-pen can keep the animals in a healthy condition. If the progeny and the breed should grow well, it is necessary that the cow-pens also must be maintained well. When occasion arises, the owner of a cow must not hesitate to look after personally the arrangements and cleanliness of the cows and the cow-pens. Only the owner can pay better attention to the cows than his own servants. The cows and the cattle are always happy with the patting of their masters. Where such a cow-pen is available, the cows are indeed happy and healthy. They grow well and enrich the owner. It is our creed to maintain good cows and increase their breed.'

(Atharva-Veda 3-14, 1 to 6)

‘सं वो गोष्ठेन सुषदा सं रय्या सं सुभूत्या । अहर्जातस्य यन्नाम तेन
वः सं सृजामसि ॥ १ ॥ संजग्माना अबिभ्युषीरस्मिन्गोष्ठे करीषिणीः । बिभ्रतीः सोम्यं
मध्वनमीवा उपतेन ॥ ३ ॥ शिवो वो गोष्ठो भवतु शारिशकेव पुष्यत । इहैवोत प्र
जायध्वं मया वः सं सृजामसि ॥ ५ ॥ मया गावो गोपतिना सचध्वमयं वो गोष्ठ इह
पोषयिष्णुः । रायस्पोषेण बहुला भवन्तीर्जीवा जीवन्तीरुप वः सदेम ’ ॥ ६ ॥

Such was the meticulous care which the Vedic people took of the places in which they brought up their most regarded animal, the cow. There is another revealing passage in the Atharva-Veda which informs us about the diseases of the loving species and the remedies which the house owners adopted for the well-being of their cattle. The Atharva-Veda tells us:

‘Nature has created cows of different colours and various qualities. It must be seen that the cow that gives a single calf at a time is a good healthy cow. When a cow behaves abnormally in mating in wrong seasons or if she gives twins, it should be inferred that the animal is not good but a diseased one and may die soon. This disease of the cow is contagious and may spread to the other animals. Carnivorous animals are always destructive in their mentality, and so is a diseased cow. It is, therefore, necessary to send the cow to a veterinary doctor or an expert cow-man who understands the maladies of the cows and the medical treatment for them. Cows treated in

proper times can be cured of their diseases. This animal, cow, brings general welfare not only to man but to other animals too, to animals like horse and bullocks. It should not be forgotten that the cow is blissful for all the people and for the land. (The cow has so many great virtues.) She gives us the nectar of milk. Everything that cow is associated with is blissful. She feeds the mankind with the richest type of food. This country of ours is indeed famous for its salubrious climates; there is also a large number of veterinary experts. When a cow is attacked by some disease, she should be taken to such a healthy place in the country. She should be kept there till she recovers. What is the use of keeping a diseased cow amongst healthy animals and men and thus endangering their lives? It is always wise to send our cows to be cured of their ailments to the land where meritorious men, men who perform the sacrifices, and those who are experts in animal-diseases live!'

(Atharva-Veda 3-28, 1 to 6)

एकैक्येषा सृष्ट्या सं बभूव यत्र गा असृजन्त भूतकृतो विश्वरूपाः । यत्र विजायते यमिन्यपर्तुः सा पशून् क्षिणाति रिफती रुशती ॥ १ ॥ एषा पशून्सं क्षिणाति क्रव्याद् भूत्वा व्यदूरी । उतैनां ब्रह्मणे दद्यात् तथा स्योना शिवा स्यात् ॥ २ ॥ शिव भव पुरुषेभ्यो गोभ्यो अश्वेभ्यः शिवा । शिवस्मै सर्वस्मै क्षेत्राय शिवा न इहैधि ॥ ३ ॥ इह पुष्टिरिह रस इह सहस्रपातमा भव । पशून् यमिनि पोषय ॥ ४ ॥ यत्रा सुहार्दः सुकृतो मदन्ति विहाय रोगं तन्वः स्वायाः । तं लोकं यमिन्यभि संबभूव सा नो मा हिंसीन् पुरुषान् पशून् ॥ ५ ॥ यत्रा सुहार्दा सुकृतामग्निहोत्रहुतां यत्र लोकः । तं लोकं यमिन्यभिसंबभूव सा नो मा हिंसीन् पुरुषान् पशून् ॥ ६ ॥

The Vedic Aryas, considered the cow not merely as a sacred animal, but also most valuable from the economic as well as utilitarian point of view and paid the best attention to the maintenance of this animal which was basically indispensable in the Vedic economy. It must have become obvious from the above passages that the Vedic people knew well the art of cow-breeding. They had studied the maladies and their cures of this bovine species—in so fine a manner as to determine which climates were congenial to them. It is not necessary to cite here all the references from the different books of Vedic

literature, regarding the cow and her progeny. We give only one more piece from Rig-Veda. The poet sings: 'May God Indra bless me with the wealth of cows. May the "deity of destiny" send cows and her progeny to my home. Cow's milk is an indispensable ingredient (in the preparation) of Soma. The cows which give us such milk are indeed the gifts of Indra. To get them is to be blessed by him. O cows, you give strength to weak persons; you make pale faces lustrous. Your bellowing is a blessing, may you bring your auspices to our homes, you are welcome. All this your prowess is well-known and well-sung in assemblies of men. You give us calves which are so very useful to us. Your food is simple fresh grass. What you want is pure drinking water from the common drinking ponds. May you never be attacked, or overpowered by thieves. May not any sinner touch you. Let the missiles of Rudra never fall upon you.'

गावः भगः गावः इन्द्रः मे अच्छान् गावः सोमस्य प्रथमस्य भक्षः ।
 इमाः याः गावः सः जनासः इन्द्रः इच्छामि इत् हृदा मनसा चित् इन्द्रम् ॥ ५ ॥
 यूयं गावः मेदयथ कृशम् चित् अश्रीरम् चित् कृणुथ सुऽप्रतीकम् । भद्रं गृहं कृणुथ
 भद्रवाचः बृहत् वः वयः उच्यते सभासु ॥ ६ ॥ प्रजावतीः सुयवसम् रिशान्तिः शुद्धाः अपः
 सुऽप्रपाने पिबन्ती । मा वः स्तेनः ईशत मा अघऽशंसः परिवः हेतिः रुद्रस्य
 वृज्याः ॥ ७ ॥

(Rig-Veda 6-28, 5 to 7)

It is on account of such a sentiment in regard to the mother cow that the Vedic bards, every one without exception has exhorted the people: 'O, thoughtful men, never entertain the idea of killing a cow which is so very useful, so greatly auspicious and so lovable an animal.'

“प्र नु वोचं चिक्वितुषे जनाय मा गामनेहसा मदिति वधिष्ठ ॥”

The poet further emphasizes an appeal to the Vedic community in words which are pure gold. He requests: 'Just listen to me, Cow is the mother of the Rudras; she is the daughter of Vasus; she is the sister of the sun—and more than that she is the source of nectar.' (*Amruta-Amrotos*—Greek).

“माता रुद्राणां दुहिता वसूनां स्वसादित्यानां अमृतस्य नाभिः”

It may be asked here if what has been described in the Vedas as the 'Gomedha' does not refer to the 'cow-sacrifice'? If it be a fact, how was it considered to be consistent with the high sentiments and regards expressed for the sacred cow in the above passages? Cow's flesh (beef) must have been a common and popular dish of the Aryas. For it has been the accepted convention of the Vedic people that they never offer anything in sacrifice to their gods what they could not part-take themselves as their food! Scholars have tried to answer this embarrassing problem. There is no doubt that in many places plain words denoting cow, cow's flesh, hide, bones and other parts are used. There are places where cow is asked to be killed and a dish to be prepared in honour of a guest. If these words are translated literally, they yield a meaning which is not only repugnant but inconsistent with the faith of the Aryas that 'cow is the mother of man'. These Vedic words and verses present a puzzle which has not been quite satisfactorily resolved. Some scholars have tried to explain this anomaly or inconsistency by suggesting that the term 'Gomedh' (cow-sacrifice) is merely symbolic. But there may be a section of the objectors who may not feel convinced by this explanation. Our explanation on the above doubt is as follows:—

'The Shatpath Brahman has enumerated a list of animals worthy of being offered in sacrifices. They are: "Prajapati", "Purush", "a horse", "a bullock", "a he-goat", and "he-sheep"'. All the animals offered in sacrifice to gods must necessarily as a rule be of male gender. It was a dictum of the Vedic people that 'animals' were 'food'. In the Vedic literature generally and especially in this particular place the word 'Gau' (cow) is used not in the sense of the female cow, but in the sense of the male of the species. In Sanskrit language the word 'Gau' (from which Cow is derived), means both the male and the female cow. In fact, it is a generic term connoting the species of cow. It is in this sense that this word has been used in the Vedas in all places and certainly in the above reference where the 'cow' has been recommended as an animal worthy of sacrifice. In the Atharva-Veda as well as Rig-Veda

it is unmistakably mentioned that 'cow' is unkillable. Thus we have two prescriptions, namely, that 'cow is unkillable' and that the 'cow can be offered in sacrifice to the gods'. We must find out an interpretation which will be consistent. The tradition of interpretation has explained the word 'Gau' in the sense of the 'male cow' or the 'bull'. The argument, of course, is that, if it is not so understood then the prescription of the Shatpath will be in conflict with the command of Rig-Veda, namely, that the 'cow is unkillable'. There is undoubtedly irrefutable force in this argument. If we examine the convention and prescription of the Vedic Aryas, it will be seen that they never offered the female of a species in sacrifice. The Prajapati, the Puroosh, the Ashva, the Mesha, all these are males of their species. It is without doubt that in this place the word 'Gau' must also be taken to denote a bull and not a cow. This interpretation solves all the doubt, satisfactorily and avoids contradiction between the prescriptions of the Vedic literature. It is unfortunate that those who did not understand the conventions and the course behind the practice in sacrifices went wrong in their interpretation and mislead laymen. These scholars have erred beyond excuse in their mistaken propaganda that the Vedic Aryas killed the cow and ate her flesh.

Besides the cow and her progeny, there were so many types of animals which received fairly good attention from the Vedic people. The elephant, the horse, the buffalo, the sheep, goats, dogs and other pet animals were brought up in the Vedic homes with great care. The dog had secured a position of confidence in the mind of the Vedic man. The dog had indeed become a reliable friend of man.

With due recognition of the merits and utility of different species of animals, it has to be noted here that the cow ruled supreme in the minds and homes of the Vedic people. Cattle was wealth in the Vedic ideology and therefore the Vedic bard always prays: 'O Lord, may you keep all our animals, horses, sheep, goats, cows and our men and women all happy.'

(Rig-Veda 1-43-6)

“शं नः करत्यर्धते—सुगं मेषाय मेष्ये । नृभ्यो नारिभ्यो गवे ”

The third source of Vedic wealth and prosperity was, the trade and commerce. It is a misconception of some scholars that allegedly primitive, as the Vedic people were, they had not developed their internal trade and much less the overseas communications and commerce. It would be profitable to enumerate first the different varieties of trades and avenues of commerce which were available in those Vedic times. The Shukla Yajur-Veda in its 30th chapter on the topic of the Purushmedha' (human sacrifice). gives an exhaustive list of the participants or co-operators who had to be associated in the consummation of this particular Vedic sacrifice. According to the Vedic practice, one person was chosen as a representative of every trade, commerce, business, profession, avocation and occupation, etc., to be associated in the performance of the sacrifice. This practice of the 'institution of the Vedic sacrifice' is indeed a wonderful idea in which a member of every section and layer of the society found representation. A mere glance at the list of the persons that have been so exhaustively enumerated will be not merely interesting but very much enlightening on the subject of the state of the civilisation of the Vedic people. The list contains:—

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|-------------------------------------|--|
| (1) teacher, | (2) a soldier, |
| (3) a trader, | (4) a labourer, |
| (5) a dancer, | (6) an actor, |
| (7) a singer, | (8) a jester, |
| (9) a chariot-manufacturer, | (10) a carpenter, |
| (11) a potter, | (12) an iron-smith, |
| (13) a jeweller, | (14) a peasant, |
| (15) a manufacturer of arrows, | (16) a manufacturer of bows, |
| (17) a manufacturer of bow-strings, | (18) a fowler, |
| (19) a dog-monger, | (20) a person engaged in the task of recovering things lost in the rivers, |
| (21) hunter, | (22) mat-maker, |
| (23) an actress, | (24) a prostitute, |
| (25) a physician, | (26) an astrologer, |
| (27) a tailor, | (28) an elephant-driver, |
| (29) a horse-man, | (30) a cow-herd, |
| (31) a shepherd, | (32) a goat-monger, |
| (33) a brewer, | (34) a coin-minter, |

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|---|--|
| (35) an assistant of a chariot-driver, | (36) a wood-fetcher of wood, |
| (37) the fuel-seller, | (38) the server, |
| (39) a sculptor, | (40) a massagist, |
| (41) a washerman, | (42) a dyer, |
| (43) a milkman, | (44) a black-smith, |
| (45) assistant to blacksmith, | (46) make-up-man of an actress, |
| (47) a manufacturer of swords, and sheaths, | (48) a cobbler, |
| (49) a tanner, | (50) fishermen of five types according to their means and devices to catch the fish. |

Then there are five other types of workers, namely:—

- | | |
|---------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| (51) a goldsmith, | (52) a grocer, |
| (53) a wood-cutter, | (54) a gambling-den proprietor, |
| (55) musical instrument player, | (56) a conch-blower, |
| (57) a forest-guard, | (58) a magician, |
| (59) a trumpeter, | (60) a drummer, etc., etc., etc. |

These are expressly named professions and professionals. Besides these, there are a large number of trades and crafts whose names we find sprinkled all over the Vedic literature.

We have noted some references which suggest the overseas communications of the Vedic people. Without a developed industry of ship-building, it is not possible to conceive of any sea-voyages. That the Vedic literature contains a number of references to the voyages on the seas as also the hazardous experiences of sailing in the ships, it has to be inferred that the marine industry must have been fairly well advanced. As to the experiences, we have already expressed, our view that they must be taken to be of high seas and no other waters.

Trade and commerce are always the stimulus for the expansion of industries which in their turn multiply the prosperity and wealth of a nation. The Bharatiya people had very well recognised the contribution of trade and commerce in social development. It is possible to imagine what great importance they gave to this branch of the nation's economy.

The Atharva-Veda throws sufficient light upon the condi-

tions of trade and commerce in those days. The Vedic poet says:

'I pray the God who encourages trade and commerce, to come to our help and to lead us this time. It is by his grace that we gather wealth in trade. May that God remove the high-way robbers, plunderers and officials who extort money from us taking advantage of their authority. May the God make easy all our roads which lie between the sky and the earth—by which we have to go to our destinations making these flow with milk and ghee for us. May God see that all our movements are profitable and money-earning. I offer these "Samidhas", sticks, and ghee in the sacrificial fire with a desire that I should reap good profit in my trade, and that I should be able to endure all the hardships, and also that all the obstacles in our way may be removed. I am confident that I will be fully successful in the commitments of my trade as I perform meritorious deeds conscientiously. O Lord, we have come far away in a foreign land, leaving our homes behind us for this trade. If there occur some mistakes in our behaviour in this land I pray you to forgive us. I beseech you to make all our trade dealings profitable. Let our purchases and sales both bring us wealth. Let every dealing be individually profitable. This our policy of enterprise in competition in trade in this distant land must become profitable to us in the end. O Lord, all this sacrificial worship is to please you. May you accept our offerings. Know you, that I carry on my trade on my capital. I wish that my capital should be quite sufficient for my trade and should not fall short. O Lord, be kind on me and remove everyone that obstructs my profit. It is my earnest desire to trade on my capital and take large profits. It is for you to infuse in me a determination and firmness in my mind to stand all difficulties as well as to bear all the set-backs without retreating in my undertakings until I collect my profits.'

(Atharva-Veda 3-15, 1 to 6)

इन्द्रमहं वणिजं वोदयामि स न ऐतु पुर एता नो अस्तु ।

नुदन्नरातिं परिपन्थिनं मृगं स ईशानो धनदा अस्तु मयाम् ॥ १ ॥

ये पन्थानो बहवो देवयाना अन्तरा द्यावा पृथिवी संचरन्ति ।
 ते मा जुषन्तां पयसा घृतेन यथा क्रीत्वा धनमाहराणि ॥ २ ॥
 इध्मेनाग्न इच्छमानो घृतेन जुहोमि हव्यं तरसे बलाय ।
 यावदीशे ब्रह्मणा वन्दमान इमां धियं शतसेयाय देवीम् ॥ ३ ॥
 इमामग्ने शरणि मीमृषो नो यमध्वानमगाम दूरम् ।
 शुनं नौ अस्तु प्रपणो विक्रयश्च प्रतिपणः फलिनं मा कृणोतु ।
 इदं हव्यं संविदानौ जुषेथां शुनं नो अस्तु चरितमुत्थितं च ॥ ४ ॥
 येन धनेन प्रपणं चरामि धनेन देवा धनमिच्छमानः ।
 तन्मे भूयो भवतु मा कनीयोऽग्रे मातग्नो देवान् हविषा निषेध ॥ ५ ॥
 येन धनेन प्रपणं चरामि धनेन देवा धनमिच्छमानः ।
 तस्मिन्म इन्द्रो रुचिमा दधातु प्रजापतिः सविता सोमो अग्निः ॥ ६ ॥

This hymn we have cited above is an eloquent commentary on all the aspects of foreign and forward trade which even a modern businessman takes care to anticipate and guard. It is enough to note the very terminology used in this hymn which is a sufficient pointer to the advanced system of trade in land and over the seas. 'Dhan'—capital, 'Mool Dhan'—basic capital, was the foundation of all trade. 'Dhan' is also used in the sense of 'profit'. The trader expects that his dealings, purchases and sales should both be profitable. The money-lender or the financier is also there, by suggestion in the hymn. The words for different types of purchases have also been mentioned. There is a fine reference to the business tactic used by a skilful trader which is called the 'charit'. The trader has the idea of enterprise and aggressive tactic of a bull in a strong market. The patience of a 'bear' to suffer losses in a falling market and lie low until it recovers, without liquidating the holdings is also indicated. The idea of risks of competition in the market was there. Where capital was inadequate, it looks that, there were individuals or firms, which arranged the finance. The trader knew well the season and the situation when he could purchase or sell the commodity in a favourable market. In short, all the manoeuvres of an enterprising and successful trader seem to be common knowledge. It is very realistic that the trader who has to go a long way away from his home for trade was afraid of the thieves

on the way, of the vices in the distant land, of lapses in character or offences in good behaviour. It may be the self-experience of the poet who prays that he should be saved from all these things. There is no need to disbelieve this realistic poet or to say that his description is fictitious. The Atharva-Veda in this one short piece offers almost a whole charter of instructions to a trader who wants to fully succeed in his undertakings. From the adulteration of goods right up to the winning manners of a salesman, all factors and measures which go to make a dealing or the whole trade profitable have been enumerated in this one small piece.

Thus we have reviewed all the three aspects of the Vedic economics which depended upon mainly agriculture, cattle breeding and trade and commerce. If it is desired to have a picture of the prosperity which the Vedic people experienced and enjoyed, here is a relevant description:

‘The King Bhavya gave his preceptor Kakshiwan 100 golden Nishkas, 100 horses, 10 chariots, 60,000 cows and 1000 other gifts.’

(Rig-Veda 1-126-2)

शतं राज्ञो नाधमानस्य निष्कान् शतमश्वान् प्रयतान् सद्य आदम् ।
उप मा श्यावाः स्वनयेन दत्ता दधूमन्तो दश रथासो अस्थुः । षष्टिः सहस्रमनुगव्य-
मागात् ।

‘The King Divodasa gave his preceptor 10 horses, 10 treasures of gold, 10 costly garments, 10 balls of gold and so on.’

(Rig-Veda 6-47-23)

दशश्वान्दशक्रोशान्दश वस्त्राधिभोजना । दशो हिरण्यपिण्डान् दिवोदा-
सादक्षानिषम् ।

The King Dabhya is also resorted to have offered his own gift on such very gigantic scales to Shyavashawas.

We have given above the descriptions of the gifts of kings as they rightly indicate the wealth which the kings distributed to their priests and Gurus. It is not any solitary occasion of a sacrifice in which such gifts were thrown away; nor were sacrifices rare and occasional. The ‘institute of sacrifice’ was a very common aspect of Vedic life; and no sacrifice could be

complete without proper gifts to the different participants and functionaries.

Thus we have broadly looked into the conditions of wealth and the manner of its production and acquisition which was generally termed as 'Yoga'. Now we can have an idea as to how this wealth produced in abundance was distributed in the society without occasioning any conflict, competition, hatred or inequality.

The basic consideration underlining the smooth and sound policy of distribution of wealth in the society was the 'Individual'. It is a truism that for a human being to live in peace, all his wants and urges must be fully and adequately satisfied. The society or the economic system which provides for the satisfaction of these legitimate wants and urges of an individual constituent can be said to be very sound in its foundation. In Bharatiya terminology the objects which give comfort and pleasure whether physical or psychological are called 'Bhogya Padartha', i.e., the object of enjoyment. The individual can derive full pleasure from the object of enjoyment only when he has a notion of absolute possession or ownership of the object. This concept of ownership was very scientifically analysed and admitted by the Bharatiya people. The boundary line between ownership of the individual and that of the society has been very well defined by the Bharatiya thinkers. In the historical evolution of capitalist systems this concept of the individual or private ownership came to be recognised in both the fields of production and distribution in such an unrestrained manner that it has become inconsistent or directly opposed to the interests of the society at large. An individual remains the owner of the means of production or the objects of enjoyment legally even when that his possession is the legitimate cause of the starvation of innumerable individuals in the same society. There is no legal prohibition or restraint which could curb this evil aspect of private ownership in a capitalist or *laissez faire* society. In other types of social systems like Communism, or Guild Socialism, the pendulum has gone to the other extreme in completely liquidating this concept of private ownership

or the individual freedom. All these later developments in the economic systems which go under the bracket of socialism were intended to enlarge the sphere of the ownership of the society in preference to or in liquidation of individual ownership but unfortunately in its efforts for nationalisation of industries, traders, the means of production, etc., etc., the result which has come is the establishment of absolute ownership of the State, on everything that exists in the State from man to atom. In this latter system of economic philosophy the individual turns merely an automaton, a dump slave, a robot of the State, depending upon the institution of administration even for the normal needs of life. It can be well imagined how this type of total slavery of the individual and helpless dependence on the State must be hampering all his chances and hopes to rise higher and evolve himself according to his likings. The institution of administration or in general the State is in all places composed of individuals who have not fallen from the sky but emerged from the social conflicts of classes. Ultimately the result is that under the guise of State supremacy and authority, it is only some individuals or a party that come to be empowered as the masters of millions of the masses. 'Frankensteins' of the State authority over the dumb individuals 'frighten' all free thinkers. Italy, Germany and Russia have all presented such 'frankensteins' on their national stages.

Whatever may be the system whether it is individual ownership or the State proprietorship, the labourer has to be dealt with as an individual, paid according to his needs and work. At some level some sort of individual ownership has to be recognised. Even in the Communist society where the proprietorship of the State prevails, the individual has the right to his earnings. But what is the test of determining the wages or the equivalent which will substantiate the wants of an individual? It must be in all considerations the qualities, the competence, the capacity and the actual production of the individual. At this stage even if we consider all men to be equal, there are some who are more equal than others. The individuals who gain higher wages and remunerations, have

the right and they do exercise it to spend their earnings as they like. It is at that stage that an unexpected inequality takes birth. In the modern Russian socialism which tried to liquidate all classes and equal all men, a situation has arisen, it is said, where new classes have been already created. The Bharatiya social philosophers had anticipated all these possibilities and pitfalls and prescribed an effective device according to which they raised the economic structure of their society. The first of the three principles which constitute the device was:—

(1) The right of ownership of an individual was admitted only to that extent and to those of the objects or their parts, which remained as residue after the wants and urges of the whole society were fully provided for and satisfied.

(2) The second concept was that of a trusteeship with the philosophical outlook that one has the right to enjoy only so much as he needs and he can enjoy this only with the sentiment that he is the trustee of the whole which has been entrusted to him for safe custody and honest passing on to humanity.

(3) The third constituent of the device was the spirit of sacrifice generated by the Vedic 'institution of sacrifice'. Having enunciated these three principles or the basic components, it will now be easy to look into the steel-frame of the economic structure of Bharatiya society, which we will do in the next chapter.

CHAPTER XXIX

SCHEME AND SCOPE OF VEDIC ECONOMICS

ALL this universe is, in the Bharatiya concept, the object of enjoyment. The individual soul who is sentient is the subject which experiences the joys supposed to be proffered by the innumerable objects in the universe. But the souls being infinite and the objects being in that proportion limited, there is the need of a wise understanding and equitable distribution of the objects of enjoyment. It became necessary to devise and accept some order and method in the equitable and justifiable distribution of these objects.

One basic precept at the threshold of action impressed upon the Vedic mind was to discard, completely rule out the method of imposition of any idea or order from without, and to ingrain a sense and sentiment in the individual soul from within, as regards its duties and obligations. The three principles which we have enūnciated in the last chapter have had much to bring about this sense and spirit of self-determination and recognition of the individual responsibilities and obligations to the community. It was by the successful infusing of that moral principle of self-control or self-choice that the Bharatiya social builders had been able to achieve a miracle of so stable a social order unafraid of any assaults from outside or any crisis and anarchy from within.

What is the secret of this great achievement that for thousands of years the society remained completely unassailable from all attacks from outside? Before we explain how this fact which looks a miracle was worked out, it is necessary to consider how much and in what ways modern ideas and ideologies claim to improve and in doing so affect the Hindu society which is censured to be conservative and static but is by character progressive and in essence eternal.

If we look to the different ideologies and isms that hold the world outside Bharat today, we find broadly three philosophies

having more or less a complete sway on the minds of masses in different civilised nations: (1) Individualism, or Freedoms of the Individual, (2) Socialism, and (3) Nationalism, are the three main concepts prevailing in the world. It is generally claimed that the Western nations evolved their modern thoughts and philosophies in the wake of the French revolution. The consciousness of the freedoms of an individual which was roused in the minds of thinkers brought the revolution and shook the whole European society to life. It may be that in some States on the European continent different isms might have gained supremacy over the minds of the people. It was the philosophy of the personal freedoms that came to culminate in the end in the concept of democracy. It will be pertinent here to state in brief how the supremacy of this thought of personal freedoms came to conquer the ground.

It came to be asserted and recognised that every individual had the birth right of satisfying his wants and passions in this universe as much as the privileged people. All barriers of caste, creed, colour, religion and birth came to be considered artificial and man-made. All sorts of happiness and the objects which procured the joys of life were recognised to be within the right of every individual. Every person has absolute freedom to determine what he wants and to get it; to say what he liked and refuse to be denied that, or discriminated on the grounds of birth or class. The only limitation which was recognised was an equal right of all other individuals in the society. Having granted absolute freedom to the individual, it became necessary to see that the interests and rights of individuals did not clash with each other. It is hardly seen that men behave within the limits of their rights of their own accord. A power or an authority was, therefore, the logical necessity to restrain men, not from exercising their rights and freedoms but from interfering with or encroaching upon similar rights and freedoms of their fellow-citizens. It was recognised as a sanguine principle that the authority which was expected to perform this function of acting as a check upon the exercise of human rights should not itself usurp all powers and turn men into slaves. It was this thoughtful

principle at the root of the concept of freedoms of individuals resulting in the consummation of the philosophy of democracy, that came to be established. In the safeguard of the rights of an individual and in his progress, the whole society climbed up in prosperity and civilisation as a natural result.

The Bharatiya social thinkers of early days had weighed all these factors and had given their studied thought to the relations between the physical objects of enjoyment and the sentient enjoyers, i.e., the individuals, and their inter-relations *vis-a-vis* the society. They give the most significant importance to the subject, the individual, the enjoyer more than to the object or the field of enjoyment, the physical universe. It was laid down that the ownership of an individual should rest only with as much as is necessary for keeping the body and soul together and for its protection from heat, rain and cold, with just an enough roof overhead. One who aspired for anything more than this was considered to be a robber deserving punishment. It is astonishing that so minimum a requirement for an individual has never been imagined in any other social philosophy. There is behind this one very scientific thought. What is that concept of possession and the right of ownership or the enjoyment of wealth? If we analyse and look deep into how the right to possess a thing and enjoy arises, we shall discover that there is nothing one can enjoy over which he has no absolute ownership. There cannot be unfettered enjoyment without real ownership. Manu in one of his verses has laid down that this ownership accrues to man in one of the following seven ways: by division or partition, by discovery or accidental gain, by purchase or conquest, by trade and commerce, or by labour, industry, or agricultural endeavour and as a gift.

सप्तवितागसाधर्म्याः दायोलाभः क्रयोजयः ।

प्रयोगः कर्मयोगश्च सत्प्रतिग्रह एव च ॥

According to Manu it is only in these seven ways a man can be said to have become the full owner of something. Now if we accept the truth that the real material source of all enjoyment is the combination of the five elements in the universe, the five-fold physical matter, one will have to readily

admit that nobody can ever be the real owner of any one of those elements or their combinations or permutations, i.e., the sources of enjoyment. For instance, nobody can claim exclusively the light of the Sun, waters of rivers and lakes, wind that blows over in the land, etc. These are indeed the objects of enjoyment but they are not subject to absolute ownership of anybody though in modern life we have established such rights in favour of individuals, organisations, societies, States and so on, denying them or restricting their use to others. It, therefore, follows that the right to the enjoyment of these natural things is governed or is subject to different rules and regulations. These rules came to be formulated and accepted when the conflict arose in the matter of enjoyment of these physical objects and the products of nature.

It is argued that though the element or the physical matter are beyond the right of any one individual or a State, there is definitely something which an individual creates out of the nature's gifts. What man thus produces by labour, by intelligence, by investment of capital, must be considered to be his own real property. But even in this argument there is a basic fallacy in as much as such a person who produces something out of elemental things has in reality robbed that real thing and excluded or denied the enjoyment of it to someone else.

The Bharatiya thinkers have, in such conflicts of thoughts, come to a very sensible conclusion. They laid down that man may produce and create all things by virtue of his intelligence, labour, etc., but even in such a case the man is entitled only to the extent of his needs, only to that extent he should assert his ownership over the thing, object, product or wealth whatever you call it, and as for the rest he must consider himself to be the trustee for some others in the society. The Bharatiya philosophy has thus eliminated all the seeds of conflict and competition in the problem of enjoyment of the objects in the physical universe.

Another basic idea on which this structure of Bharatiya economics has been raised is the principle of 'sacrifice'. It is not the enjoyment but renunciation that inspires a Bharatiya

to act on the stage of life. By means of a consistent and considered 'Sanskara' (ingraining-inculcating) a Bharatiya citizen is brought up to accept the principle that pleasure lies not in enjoyment but in renunciation of the joys. There has been never any doubt that an individual has an inherent longing for the pleasures and happiness of life. Even in social schemes in which the distribution of wealth, the joys of life, and the objects of enjoyment have been planned in a systematic, impartial, equitable way, there have arisen anomalies on account of some natural situations. Though it is accepted that equal land should be distributed to individuals, the distribution becomes unequal for the reason that all land is not equal. Some is fertile and some barren. This is a paradox of life. We may talk of the equality of all men, but nature does not recognise the principle. All men will have, therefore, to accept the inherent inequality in nature and man. This becomes the cause of heart-burning, jealousy, and competition between the constituents of a society. Where an economic scheme upholds 'enjoyment of life' as the ideal, this struggle and competition becomes most disastrous. But in a system where the enjoyment has been condemned and renunciation of the joys have been commended the natural result is, there is less chance of competition and struggle. It is from this point of view that Bharatiya thinkers had focussed their attention upon the subject, the individual, the enjoyer, rather than upon the objects or the rights over them. In the former concept because man could not be taught to curb his passions, the power of the State became supreme, and only the fear of the administration became the controlling force. The Bharatiya thought developed in quite the other way. It was not on account of fear of any one, but for the love of duty that a Bharatiya citizen worked to his utmost capacity without any expectation or hope to reaping the fruits, or desiring of joys that accrue from his actions except what he experiences in doing the same.

In the latter Upanishadic period this thought of the Rig-Vedic people was more scientifically systematised. In Isha-vasya Upanishad this corner-stone has been laid in the very

first verse on which the grand mansion of the Vedic philosophy of life has been built. The sage who did it, it may not be very much widely known was that great architect of the Vedic nation—Dadhichi—who forged the Vajra out of his bones to destroy Vritra, the arch-enemy of Vedic life, at the hands of Indra. This foundation stone declares to the world, that all that exists is the abode of God, let us, therefore, enjoy it by renouncing it (by sharing it with all other) rather coveting its exclusive possession for one's self. Let us not be greedy for the wealth which belongs to others (in which others have an equal claim and share).

ईशावास्यमिदं सर्वं यत्किञ्च जगत्यां जगत् ।

तेन त्यक्तेन भुञ्जीथाः मागृधः कस्यस्त्वित् धनम् ॥

The verse which cryptically epitomises the angle of vision of Vedic philosophy has rightly become the subject of very great works of philosophy for the last 2000 years. We do not propose to say anything more on this highly crystallised thought. It is enough to assert that the spirit revealed in this verse was the ideal which every Bharatiya sought to imbibe in his life. As the world in fact the universe is considered to be the abode of 'God' man becomes almost a servant, a 'Pashoo' of utility in the abode.

The next thought which channelises the conduct of a Bharatiya was that life is itself a sacrifice. This is a very deep conviction of the Bharatiya philosophers that life is a great sacrifice. To understand this idea we must go a little deeper in the thought behind the concept of sacrifice. People wrongly imagine that sacrifice means only kindling the fire and putting the oblations in the burning flames. That is too narrow and literal a meaning of the word 'Yajna'. Broadly speaking, 'Yajna' means everything which an individual does in dedication to God. In the worship and dedication to God man offers what is pleasant to him. In the sacrificial fire we put sticks, ghee, etc. In the sacrifice or 'Yajna' of life we dedicate all our actions at the feet of the Almighty. The Gita has summarised in very simple words this whole conception of 'Yajna' and the offering of life in it as an oblation. It is

a Rig-Vedic dogma that 'Yajna' was created in the beginning with the 'creation' itself. Brahman commended that it is in 'Yajna' that men will achieve all their desires. Gita tells us that those who carry on their life without this sense of dedication to gods are criminals, sinners, and a social curse.

यज्ञार्थात्कर्मणोऽन्यत्र लोकोऽयं कर्मबन्धनः ।
 तदर्थं कर्म कौन्तेय मुक्तसंगः समाचर ॥ ९ ॥
 सहयज्ञाः प्रजाः सृष्ट्वा पुरोवाच प्रजापतिः ।
 अनेन प्रसविष्यध्वमेष वोऽस्त्विष्टकामधुक् ॥ १० ॥
 देवान् भावयतानेन ते देवा भावयन्तु वः ।
 परस्परं भावयन्तः श्रेयः परमवाप्स्यथ ॥ ११ ॥
 इष्टान्भोगान्हि वो देवा दास्यन्ते यज्ञभाविताः ।
 तैर्दत्तान्प्रदायैभ्यो यो भुंक्ते स्तेन एव सः ॥ १२ ॥
 यज्ञशिष्टाशिनः संतो मुच्यन्ते सर्वकिल्बिषैः ।
 भुञ्जते ते त्वर्घ पापा ये पचन्त्यात्मकारणात् ॥ १३ ॥

(Gita 3/9 to 13)

In the later developments of philosophy this word Yajna came to be identified with all the functions and obligations which the social system of the Hindus demanded of them. Yajna became identical with the duty of an individual. What remained as residue in the Yajna was the rightful portion of man. It was sinful for men to covet anything more than what the performance of the Yajna, duty in life, demanded of him.

In the Rig-Veda, we are told, 'one who does not feed Aryaman and his own friends, one who feeds himself, is an enemy of the society.'

नार्यमणं पुष्यति नो सखायं केवलाघो भवति केवलादी ॥

(Rig-Veda 10/117/6)

The plain implication of the words is that it was considered to be the duty of every citizen to see that all members of the society were fed as well as himself. The Bharatiya sociologists have given a highly imaginative and convincing thought in this context. They say what a man partakes after feeding his fellow beings is 'Amrit', Amratos—which makes

him immortal, but what he eats alone, without sharing is—sin—poison which kills him.

We have thus reviewed the three basic ideas on which the early economic structure of the Bharatiya society was built up. It was on this simple but just and equitable theory that the relations between a king and his subjects as well as the functions of constituents of a society were determined. The implementation of these basic concepts was not enforced by any power or authority of any person but was achieved by self-determination and the inherent understanding as well as well-planned education and inculcation of the principle in the minds of the people. The king's authority was there no doubt, and where man failed, the king did exercise it, but the general sight was that the king was merely a supervisor, as men obeyed the laws of life by their own self-will.

It may be asked what was the system of taxes and revenues in those days. There are so many mentions of the existence of something like a tax and collections of revenues. The institution of kingship was entitled to collect taxes and revenues. There were different measures by which these taxes were levied and revenue-collections were calculated. In the days of Manu these rules came to be very much precisely laid down and rigidly observed. Generally the tax was $\frac{1}{6}$ th of the value of an article. In the 7th chapter of Manu we are given all the details how the king should assess the taxes on goods purchased or sold, after considering the cost and expenses, as well as the forwarding charges for the transaction and transportation of the goods. It was the profit that was taxed in the case of a trader or an agriculturist. The king was warned that he should take care that taxes were collected in such a manner as not to devour capital or affect its formation. Just as parasites, the calf, the honey-bee suck blood, milk, and honey in small quantities, so too a king should collect his taxes and revenue from the people without ruining the source completely. It is specifically mentioned that on the transactions of cattle and gold, the king's portion was as much as half of the profit. In the trade of corns, it was $\frac{1}{6}$ th to $\frac{1}{12}$ th. In the case of trees, flesh, honey, ghee, cosmetics, medicines,

flowers, fruits, roots, leaves, vegetables, grass, leather, cane-articles, earthen-ware, stone-ware, the king was entitled to collect $\frac{1}{6}$ th portion of the profits. In regard to vegetables, leaves, etc., on which poor people depend for their livelihood, the king's portion was a trifle. Workers like carpenters, barbers, washermen, cobblers, smiths and such other manual labourers who lived on the earnings of their daily wages were exempted from all taxes in the old system of economy. But these people had to give the labour of one day in a month free to the representative of the king. That was considered to be the levy in the form of free work in lieu of a tax.

We can deduce three principles of the Bharatiya taxation, namely: (1) the taxes varied according to the monetary conditions, (2) the taxes were calculated on profits only, and (3) the workers and labourers contributed work in place of taxes. The class of Brahmanas, ascetics, teachers, etc., whose occupations were non-productive were exempt from all taxation.

The penalties for different offences also varied in almost the same manner as taxation. But the persons and the class which were expected to be very much acquainted with the gravity of the crimes were subject to larger punishments and penalties. It is laid down as a prescription that a Brahman would have to pay 16 times the penalty which an ignorant citizen was charged and the king had to pay 1000 times.

The next interesting point in the economic system was the manner of payment of wages and remunerations. Broadly every administration divides in two classes the services which performed different types of functions in the State. The first, i.e., intellectual class, and the second, the working class, were paid according to their merits and utility. The Brahman class which performed intellectual functions, was paid on a different scale than the working class. Amongst the intellectuals also there used to be grades. For instance, out of 16 priests who officiated at a sacrifice, the first four were considered to be on the highest level and were paid highest. These 16 priests were divided in four grades and the proportion of their payments was 12:6:4 and 3 respectively. Manu has

expressly laid down the rule for the payment to the priests in the above proportion.

Almost the same rule which was applicable to the payments of the priests has been prescribed in regard to the wages of the workers according to their gradation. Manu says if the highest skilled worker gets six, the lowest would get one. So this proportion of payment of 6:1 between the highest and the lowest compares really very much equitable than the present payment in a socialised State where the proportion is said to be 100:1.

The next important item in the economic steel-frame of ancient Bharat was the concept of the ownership of land and trades and such other man-made things. The regulations which governed the ownership of land and the proprietary or monopoly rights in trades *vis-a-vis* the authority of the administration or the king were very progressive, considered in the conditions of the society 2000 years back. The Bharatiya law-givers had denied totally to the king or the ruling power any right or authority over the land and the trades. The law relating to this ownership of the land has been incorporated in Manu Smriti chapter (9):

पृथोरपीमां पृथिवीं भार्या पूर्ववेदो विदुः ।

स्थानुच्छेदस्य केदारमाहुः शन्यवतो मृगम् ॥ ४४ ॥

(Manu Smriti 9/44)

Manu tells us that historians imagined this wide globe to be the wife of king Pruthu. It was called 'Prithvi' because it belonged to the king Pruthu. The meaning is the land belongs to him who ploughs it as the prey belongs to the hunter whose arrow or sword first hits the animal. An indirect but intelligent commentary on the subject can be discerned in one of the despatches of an English resident Mount Stewart Elphinston. After the transfer of the Peshva power into the hands of English rulers, this wise administrator, in his comprehensive review of the conditions prevailing in the Maratha country—writes to his superiors:

'That a large portion of the rayats are the proprietors of their estates, subject to the payments of a fixed land tax to

Government; that their property is hereditary and they are never dispossessed while they pay their tax. Their land tax is fixed. That the king has no property in the soil but has a right merely to the revenue arising from the soil, is also found clearly stated in a passage in Stoke's "Hindu Law Books" as follows: "In conquest also where the property of the conquered consists of farms, land, money or the like, there alone (ownership) is acquired by the conqueror but only in revenues of the conquered".'

This passage we have quoted only to show that as recently as the last century the English administrator who inherited the older administration had never any doubt as regards the question of land-ownership in India. Shri Annasahib Patvardhan from above quoted rule of Manu infers the following regarding the state of affairs in the Vedic times. He says: 'The above-mentioned ancient rules conclusively show that the sovereign authority is not entitled to claim a share in the corpus of any land of the realm. Accordingly it may be stated as a general rule that so far as the Indian soil is concerned, the State or sovereign authority cannot properly be considered to have any proprietary right, at any rate, in any cultivated land or soil. Under the Hindu Law the sovereign power has only the right to receive a share of the produce of land.' This makes the position absolutely clear without any ambiguity as regards the proprietorship of the land which always vested in the people. What the king was entitled to was only $\frac{1}{6}$ th of the portion of the produce as his dues.

It may be asked what were the means to collect the land revenues and the taxes. The king had all the authority to impose punishments and penalties upon a land-owner who failed to pay the land dues. But in no case he had an authority to confiscate the land. It never happened in this country that lands or accumulation of wealth by way of profit and interests concentrated in one single individual. The Bharatiya thought never considered an individual as a unit as the Western philosophers did. In the Bharatiya social philosophy, it is the family, the whole joint family which is considered to be a single unit of the society. An individual, male or female,

is merely a constituent of the family with all his or her rights and privileges, duties and obligations completely circumscribed and safeguarded. It is on account of this fundamental difference in the outlook of Bharatiya philosophy towards an individual that he never acquired a position of power in the society or became the centre of accumulation of wealth and property. Indeed the families became great and powerful but great families had also a greater number of constituents and coparceners to share the profits as well as to undertake the responsibilities which came as a result of their fortunes. In the famous 'Hindu Law and Usage' Mayne observes in this regard: 'The student who wishes to understand the Hindu system of property must begin by freeing his mind from all previous notions drawn from English Law. They would not only be useless but misleading. In England ownership as a rule is simple, independent and unrestricted but only in special instances and under special provisions. In India on the contrary, joint ownership is the rule and will be presumed to exist in each individual case until the contrary is proved. If an individual holds property in severalty, it will, in the next generation, relapse into a state of joint tenancy. Absolute, unrestricted ownership such as enables the owner to do anything he likes with his property, is the exception. The father is restrained by his sons, the brother by his brothers, the woman by her successors. If property is free in the hands of the acquirer, it will resume its fetters in the hands of his heirs. Individual property is the rule in the West. Corporate property is the rule in the East.' (p. 293.)

The caste system of the Hindus enabled this eternal society to avoid the danger either of complete disintegration or of too much concentration of wealth in an individual; in the same manner the law of coparcenary amongst the members of a joint family has provided for equitable distribution and division of wealth from time to time. It is on account of that salubrious provision that such dangerous isms like capitalism, socialism, communism or anarchism never came to disturb the peaceful flow and equitable adjustments of wealth in the Hindu society for ages. It is a self-evident truth that

wealth multiplies and accumulates by land revenues, the profits in trades and commerce and the interest on investments. We have already seen how the Bharatiya thinkers avoided the danger of accumulation of land revenues by their unique system of land taxes and private ownership of trades, commerce and industries. They also eliminated competitions and conflicts between the pursuers of different types of trades and industries by means of their caste professions. In regard to the interest on investments they had laid down equally modest and safe regulations. Manu says that, 'never could capital be doubled by the addition of interest.'

कुमीदवृद्धिर्द्वैगुण्यं नात्येति सकृदाहता ।

धान्ये मदे लवे बाह्ये नतिक्रामति पञ्चताम् ॥ १५१ ॥

कृतानुमारादधिका व्यतिरिक्ता न सिध्यति ॥ १५२ ॥

नातिमावत्सरीं वृद्धिं न चादृष्टां पुनर्हरेत् ।

चक्रवृद्धिः कालवृद्धिः कारिता कायिका च या ॥ १५३ ॥

Manu has given very detailed and rational regulations for the charging of interest on capitals, which have not been repudiated even up to the 20th century. Almost all nations follow the practice which has been recommended by Manu more than two thousand years back. It will be interesting to note that Manu considered interest as unearned profit—meaning the acquirer had not to labour for the acquisition of this profit. He, therefore, desired that a person who gets large interest on his investments should utilise them for the good of the miserable and poor sections of the society. In the chapter on the land revenues also, all the law-givers direct that even the land dues should not be collected tyrannically and should be utilised for the good of the tenants. There is a very noted verse in which Manu censures the conduct of some money-lenders. He says, 'a Brahman who does not practise penance, and a man of wealth, who does not give charities should both of them be drowned in water by putting a large and heavy stone round their necks.

अवम्भसि प्रवेष्टव्यो कण्ठे बध्वाहतां शिलाम् । धनवन्तमदातारं ब्राह्मणं चातपस्विनम् ।

The Hindu law has a unique recommendation of the system

of gifts and charities. This direction for gifts and charities has been so devised and invested with a religious nature and sanction as to be effective in diverting the accumulated wealths to the poorer levels in the society.

What we have said above on the basis of the law books of the Hindus has all authority in the Vedic literature too. A poet tells us: 'Indra will so manage all the affairs that your subjects will always pay you your taxes.'

अथोत इन्द्रः केवलैर्विशो बलिहृतस्करत् ॥

(Rig-Veda 10-173-6)

In the Atharva-Veda, the tax system of the Hindus has been described as follows:—

'These members of the Council of a king who rules by laws and protects his subjects are actually the governors. They indeed take 1/16th of the wealth of their subjects but the same is used in different ways for the good of the society. The defence and protection of the nation, the punishment of the anti-social elements, the maintenance and encouragement of all these factors which strengthen the people are the different advantages which are derived as a benefit of the taxes. These taxes enable the administration to complete the plans for the progress of the people, to penalise the harassers of the society, to give all protection to the good, to encourage heroism of the warriors, to stabilise the social system, in short to accomplish all the ambitions and aspirations of the nation and to expand it. Realising these great uses and benefits for which taxes are collected, people pay them willingly. Those that make payments of their dues to the king, they secure safety and happiness in their country. As a result there arises such a happy situation in the nation, where those who are mighty never oppress the weak, nor have the weak ever to prostrate before the mighty.'

“यद् राजानो विभजन्त इष्टापूर्तस्य षोडशं यमस्यामी सभासदः ।
अविस्तस्मात् प्र मुञ्चति दत्तः शितिपात् स्वधा ॥ १ ॥ सर्वान् कामान् पूरयत्याभवन्
प्रभवन् भवन् । आकूतिप्रोऽविर्दत्तः शितिपान्नोप दस्यति ॥ २ ॥ यो ददाति शितिपादमविं
लोकेन संमितम् । स नाकमभ्यारोहति यत्र शुल्को न क्रियते अबलेन बलीयसे ॥ ३ ॥

(Atharva-Veda 3/29, 1 to 3)

From the above hymn a broad idea in regard to the land-revenue and the tax system could be gathered. As regards the partition and rights of division of properties, the Rig-Veda tells us, 'let all our property go to our heirs by inheritance'. (Rig-Veda 8-9-11).

वर्तिस्तोकायतनयायचातम्

It is a traditional theory of the Hindu law which has persisted even up to this day and is recognised even in other law-systems of the world that a son gets the right of inheritance with his birth. The later Hindu law-givers went a step ahead and evolved the principle which is much more scientific, that a son is supposed to be born since the day of his conception in his mother's womb. So a child in the womb of its mother becomes a rightful sharer in the property of his parents.

That is the case of a son; the daughter, of course, was not given the same right. The Rig-Veda tells us that a son should not give any share to his sister in the property inherited by him from his father. (Rig-Veda 3-31-2).

नजामये तान्त्रो रिक्थ मारैक्

This would appear to be an unjust principle of the Hindu law. But considered in the light of the state of societies and the factual conditions prevailing all the world over, we shall have to admit that what the Hindu law allowed a female in a joint Hindu family was far more just and rational than any other society could even imagine. For instance, Rig-Veda directs, 'it is the duty and obligation of a brother to see that his sister is married well and established in life (till which time he had to maintain her befitting her status in the family).'

(Rig-Veda 3-31-2)

चकारगर्भं सनितुर्निधानम् ।

The Vedic social philosophers have mixed their social thought with their religious considerations. The law of inheritance was made dependent upon and governed by the obligations which the successor, the male heir, had to perform on the death of the person whom he succeeded. It was con-

sidered to be a common principle that one who had the obligation to perform the post-mortem, religious rites of a dead person had also the right to inherit his property. It was a belief that only that person and persons who were competent to perform the post-mortem, religious rites for the safe conduct as the liberation of the deceased were eligible to inherit in order of their proximity to the dead person. For this reason in the Hindu system only a male could become the legal heir, as no female was permitted or had any obligation, to perform the post-mortem rites of the deceased. This is the result of the firmly established conception of a family instead of an individual as a unit. It is one important part of the Hindu social thought that a female belongs to the family of her husband. She is the rightful constituent not of her father's family but of her husband's. It is, therefore, nothing unjustifiable to deny the right of inheritance to a daughter who was to go to her rightful place, namely, the home and family of her husband. It is on these fundamental concepts developed by the Hindu Social philosophy that the whole structure of the Hindu law has been based. The roots are indeed in the Vedas, though we may not be able to trace the later details and developments in the earlier literature.

We have thus dealt at length with the economic thought and system on which the social structure of the Hindus was erected. It may not be useless if we summarise here the fundamental principles which go to make up the concept of the Hindu economics. We can say as follows:—

(1) In the Hindu thought it is not only the physical objects of enjoyment and the material sources of happiness were given deserving considerations; but the subject, the individual, the enjoyer was paid more attention and all evaluation was made from his point of view;

(2) The Vedic theory of economics considers the essence of ownership of an individual only to the extent and purpose of the bare necessities of a creature and after that is served, the surrender of all acquisitions for the benefit of the society. An individual is owner to the extent of his minimum needs and he is a trustee of the residue holding the same for his

fellow beings amongst whom he must distribute all the benefits;

(3) The Vedic concepts of 'Ishavasya' and 'Swamitva to the extent of Atma-bhog', i.e., the theory of 'trusteeship' of the individual in regard to the objects and sources of enjoyment and ownership to the extent of one's needs, are two very ingenious devices to turn innocuous, to take away the sting or we may say to repudiate the dangerous propositions of rights and privileges and proprietary ownership of individuals in conflict with the society;

(4) The philosophy of the 'institute of sacrifice' is at the bottom of all economic thoughts. Absolute freedom, liberation from all attachments and bonds being considered to be the *summum bonum* of life, man did not hanker after the collection of wealth, or the pursuit of passions and pleasures, but took more delight in renunciation of them all;

(5) The evolution of this unique caste system which has even according to the admissions of Western thinkers achieved miracles has been one of the elemental factors which has saved the Hindu society from collapse and anarchy witnessed by other ancient contemporary societies, or being assailed by the isms which are disturbing the modern ones.

The ancient system places before the society an ideal in the Brahman class which showed the path and practice of severance of all the bonds and fetters which drag a soul to the drab world and bind him down. Even in the Brahman class the Hindu thought commended the Sanyasi who surrendered or renounced everything as the highest ideal.

The caste system has been the strongest factor in achieving a decentralisation of wealth without conflicts in the classes. Where wealth and property accumulated the Hindu philosophy, enjoined the obligation of giving in charities and performing the sacrifices which served as channels for the redistribution of the accumulated wealth. Nobody was forbidden to amass wealth but everybody was impelled to give away in charities to the deserving fellow brothers. This encouraged the production of wealth in the nation as well as its free circulation without any compulsion.

The private proprietorship was not looked upon as an instrument for the purpose of self-enjoyment or aggrandisement but for the maintenance of an order, a status, a dignity and the continuity of the Vedic culture and civilisation. The Vedic scheme and economic structure founded on the 'Varna and Jati' arrangement enabled the Hindu society to acquire and maintain intellectual brilliance, physical prowess, commercial prosperity and plenty of labour, without the slightest disturbance in the whole society. The four classes considered themselves to be indivisible organs of the national entity or let us call it nation-personality which worked with one heart and brain but thousands of heads, hands and feet for the consummation of the national glory.

We have had all the glimpses of the life of the people as it is reflected in the Vedic literature. It is not a full and exhaustive picture at all, only a few glimpses which we could catch from the literature that has come to us as our national inheritance. It is possible to determine how much the culture and civilisation of this ancient nation have impressed and moulded the lives of other nations on the globe. It will be interesting just to cast a glance around and locate where we find the sure impacts and impressions of the Vedic thought and life as a whole. We shall turn to that in the next chapter.

CHAPTER XXX

THE VEDIC CONQUEST OF THE WORLD

WE have made an endeavour to represent the glimpses of the life of the ancient Bharatiya people as reflected in the Vedic literature. Our attempt at this projection has been as comprehensive as possible to reveal the internal life of the people as well as their social codes and conducts. If someone asks for a single passage in prose or poetry depicting a whole picture of the Vedic concept of nationhood, the Taittiriya offers a piece which should satisfy the curious inquirer in all respects. The poetic expression of the aspirations of the Vedic man can surely be considered as a manifesto of the Vedic nation or a national prayer. The Bard sings:

‘Let all the Brahmanas in this nation shine with the lustre of the Brahmanical spirit. Let all the Kshatriyas belonging to the Kshatra class turn out to be arch-masters in the art and science of weapons and wars; may the heroes be all great intrepid Maharathis (meaning warriors of highest standard); let the cows yield good volume of milk; may the bullocks and the horses in this country become strong and speedful; the woman should be of very dignified character, possessed with great virtues and charms and a good mistress of the house which she rules; let the householders turn out to be valiant in assemblies and on the battle-fields; may they get good children who will also shine as great assembly-men; let the rains bless this land according to seasons and as much as we want; let the herbs and the trees bear ample flowers and fruits; let the whole life of this our nation be full in acquisition and use of all things which make the life comfortable and joyful.’

“ आ ब्रह्मन् ब्राह्मणो ब्रह्मवर्चसी जायतामस्मिन्राष्ट्रे । राजन्य इषव्यः
शूरो महारथो जायताम् । दोग्ध्री धेनुर्वोढाऽनङ्घ्रानाशुः सप्तिः पुरंधिर्योषा जिष्णूरथेष्टाः
समेयो युवा । अस्य यजमानस्य वीरो जायताम् । निकामे निकामे नः पर्जन्यो दर्शतु ।
फलिन्यो न ओषधयः पच्यन्ताम् योगक्षेमो नः कल्पताम् ॥ ”

This is the robust prayer of the Vedic poet who has poured out his heart-feelings in regard to the fullness of life as conceived in the Vedic age. The ideal which has been perfectly presented in the above passage has also been reproduced in so many other places; but here are two verses which in a different style repeat and affirm the same aspirations of the people:

'Let the rains come at proper times; let the lands and fields be fertile with rich corns and grains; let not there ever arise any crises, agitation and disturbance on account of external aggression or internal feuds. Let the ascetics have a peaceful atmosphere in the country, to follow their pursuits of knowledge. May there not be any people without children; let all the traditions and continuities of families and dynasties persist; let there not be a single poverty-stricken man; let there not be any one with short life; let all live to the ripe old age of 100 years in perfect health and happiness.'

काले वर्षतु पर्जन्यः पृथिवी सस्यशालिनी ।

देशोऽयं क्षोभरहितो ब्राह्मणाः सन्तु निर्भयाः ॥

अपुत्राः पुत्रिणः सन्तु पुत्रिणः सन्तु पौत्रिणः ।

अधनाः सधनाः सन्तु जीवन्तु शरदां शतम् ॥

This is the plan and picture of the life most cherished by the Vedic people. We have examined how all these aspirations expressed in the above two passages have been assiduously attempted to be realised in all the branches of social life. Whether it is education or the relations of man and woman, whether it is a social problem or of political administration of the country, in war or in peace, in economics or engineering, wherever we cast a glance we shall find that everything was so devised and planned as to make a whole perfect picture of the nation. The ancient Bharatiya people have indeed exhibited marvellous genius in keeping the two higher classes, namely, the Brahman and the Kshatriya, which had the most important functions of leading the society and maintaining it were not allowed to concentrate power or wealth in their exclusive hands. It is a unique miracle of Hindu social system that an equitable and just distribution of wealth was arrived at by the device of exclusive professions for special specific classes.

In the field of spiritual values of life, it is the unanimous opinion of the world thinkers that ancient Bharat has been at the top of all nations. The temporal structure of the Hindus had the solid steel-frame of eternal spiritual values and principles which have not so far been either challenged or contradicted. It is another wonder of this system that while recognising the inequalities which are real in nature, the social philosophers have reconciled them in evolving a social structure which for all purposes satisfied the sense and substance of equality, justice and freedom without causing any hatred, conflict, competition on the ground of alleged discrimination. The Bharatiya thinkers never stopped at mere enunciating or preaching the principles and the values of life, but made practical provision for the imbibing and inculcating of all these principles in the very blood and bones of every individual by means of the 16 sacraments which started with the conception of a soul in the mother's womb to the post-mortem rights its death extending over the whole sojourn and journey of a soul from before its appearance in the cradle to after its disappearance in the grave of the five elements. With this most effective and efficient way of injecting the spiritual outlook in the practical life of every individual, the Bharatiya thinkers succeeded in making their social system an eternal and unshakable one.

We have quoted above the opinions of scholars like Justice Woodroff on the social achievements of the Bharatiya people. We give below some unforgettable passages of the Rig-Veda which lucidly impress the same sentiments upon the readers. In the 10th Mandal, the poet says:

'O friends, may you always join together in all your work; it is always better before you undertake something to discuss and exchange your thoughts; just as in ancient times all the gods used to come together to partake the libations and oblations in a sacrifice; so you too must sit together and know the thoughts of each other. Let there be an identical objective in your minds. Your assembly should all be in one place (meaning you must come together in one single assembly to decide your problems). If you do this, then it is definite that

your mind and thoughts will all converge on the same decision. Therefore, O comrades, I have told you this unforgettable secret; I offer this oblation in the fire on behalf of all of you. What the most important thing I want to tell you is, your thoughts and your plans must be identical and unanimous. Your hearts must breathe the same sentiments. Your minds must entertain the same aims and objects. If all this happens, there is nothing that will be unachievable.'

संगच्छध्वं संवदध्वं सं वो मनांसि जानताम् ।

देवा भागं यथा पूर्वं संजानाना उपासते ॥ २ ॥

समानो मंत्रः समितिः समानी समानं मनः सहचित्तमेषाम् ।

समानं मंत्रं अभिमंत्रये वः समानेन वः हविषा जुहोमि ॥ ३ ॥

समानीव आकूतिः समाना हृदयानि वः ।

समानमस्तु वो मनो यथा वः सुसहाऽसहि ॥ ४ ॥

In another passage of the Atharva-Veda a poet harps upon the same sentiment. He says: 'The waters of the rivers all flow in the same direction (to the sea); winds blow also in the same manner; the birds are also seen to fly in flocks, so may you, O gods, join together to partake my offerings in this sacrifice. I have performed this sacrifice and offered the oblations as it is conducive to the better organisation of my society. To succeed in the organisation, to secure the assistance of gods, I embarked upon this great sacrifice. You must come and bless our organisation with your eloquence, O Orators. Let all the brute in us be completely burnt into fire of the sacrifices so that the divine will shine in us throughout our lives. That spirit which carries the perennial rivers together, let the same help us to enhance the glory of our organisation. Let milk, water and ghee produce oneness amongst all the constituents of our organisation and raise it to a glorious height.'

(Atharva-Veda 1 to 15).

“ सं सं स्रवन्तु सिन्धवः सं वाताः सं पतत्रिणः ।

इमं यज्ञं प्रदिक्ते मे जुषमतां संस्राव्येन हविषा जुहोमि ॥ १ ॥

इहैव हवसा यात म इह संस्रावणा उतेमं वर्षयता गिरः ।

इहैतु सर्वो यः पशुरस्मिन् तिष्ठतु वा रयिः ॥ २ ॥

ये नदीनां संखवन्त्युत्सासः सदमक्षिताः ।

तेभिर्मे सर्वैः संस्त्रवैर्धनं सं स्रवयामसि ॥ ३ ॥

ये सर्पिषः संस्त्रवन्ति क्षीरस्य चोदकस्य च ।

तेभिर्मे सर्वैः संस्त्रवैर्धनं सं स्रवयामसि ॥ ४ ॥

Much have we said about this noble social system and the eternal spiritual values on which it was built for the good of mankind. The Vedic forefathers indeed succeeded fully in their plans and promises as we shall soon see that this wonderful social system and the philosophy had enduring effects upon the lives of the contemporary nations and communities. It will be no exaggeration to say that there is not one single civilised nation either in the pre-historic days or of the mediæval times which had not been influenced by and indebted to Bharat in so many fields of life. The debt of Bharat in the matter of culture and civilisation is especially unforgettable and eternal inheritance of these nations. This was indeed the cultural conquest of the world by the ancient Bharatiya people. How golden were those chapters of this cultural conquest and the process of civilising the communities and countries in the continents beyond Bharat, it is very interesting to note. We shall presently deal with some instances which to this day exhibit this borrowing from Bharat in their lives today.

It may be asked how such a peculiar restraint and inexplicable ban on sea voyages or the crossing of the national borders came to be recognised in the country. Was it on account of bigotry, conservative character, want of daring and adventure, or the love of a routine and stay-at-home life that created and maintained such restrictions? Is it not a fact that for a pretty long time of centuries our social codes were prejudiced and affected by such narrow and unscientific notions as of the sin in a sea-voyage, etc., which were never a part of the Bharatiya thought or practice of old days? Instances are funny and very many of the early decades of this century, when some of our progressive people went overseas for education or political missions. On their return the conservative society in this country expected these persons to undergo certain rites to wipe out the sins and blemishes of overseas voyages. This

state of affairs had come and lasted for a very long time indeed. It may be interesting to note that as early as the days of Kalidas, there is evidence to infer, that sea voyages were not much commended or looked upon with favour. In the description of the conquest of Raghu, Kalidas tells us that Raghu conquered all the countries, but to avoid the sea routes he went by land.

“ प्रतस्ये स्थलवर्त्मना ” ।

There is a suggestion in this small expression that the Hindu society had come to disapprove of sea voyages even in the days of Kalidas. How this ban came to pass, there are very cogent reasons to explain. But there is no doubt that the conditions were quite different in the days of the Vedic people as we have seen above. The Vedas never prohibited voyages on the seas. They describe various types of ships, small and big, and commemorate the victories on the seas. Besides this, it is inconceivable to imagine that a nation which kept the ambition to conquer and civilise the whole mankind should entertain such narrow and conservative ideas of sin in sea voyages. There is no need to refute the contention that this ban on sea voyages was ever in existence in the Vedic times, for in fact, it was never there.

There is another fine evidence to show the progressive and pragmatic mind of the Bharatiya people working behind their ambition of the conquest and aryanising of humanity. In the older law books like Manu, there is the description of the 'Arya-Desh' (Arya-country), over which the laws had jurisdiction. Manu circumscribes the Arya-Desh as that in which the black-deer (the Krishnamrig) was found. (Manu-Smrithi 2/23).

“ कृष्णसारस्तु चरति मृगो यत्र स्वभावतः ।

स ज्ञेयो यज्ञियो देशो म्लेच्छदेशस्ततः परः ॥

It was later discovered that Krishnamrig, the black-antelope was also found in the forests of Deccan and the further South. When they conquered the foreign islands, established their suzerainty over them, infused their culture and social philosophies in those peoples, and thus in one word gave them the Arya civilisation, a doubt arose in the hair-splitting peda-

gogues whether these conquered lands and islands could be called Arya-Bhoomi. May be, there were no black-deer according to the definition given by Manu. Medhatithi, a great genius and one of the finest annotators of Bharatiya texts who has written a lucid commentary on the *Manu's Laws for Mankind*, for that is what the caption *Manava-Dharma-Shastra* means, explains the anomaly in the following intelligent manner. He says: 'If some Kshatriya goes overseas, conquers the land, establishes the Arya social system of the Varnas and the Ashrams, and incorporates the local people in this new system, as was done in Aryavarta, then that land also can be called the Arya-Bhoomi, fit for performing the sacrifices.'

“ यदि कश्चित् क्षत्रियः द्विजातीयः राजा म्लेच्छान् पराजयेत् चातुर्वर्ण्यं वासयेत् , म्लेच्छांश्च आर्यावर्ते इव चाण्डालान् व्यवस्थापयेत् तदा सोऽपि स्याद् यज्ञियो देशः ” ।

This brilliant explanation of Medhatithi is an eloquent commentary on the adventurous spirit of conquest of the Bharatiya people. Later on, it came to be believed that as far as the arrow of a Hindu or Bharatiya could be thrown so far was his claim to the land. This was the ambitious will to conquer, which was the inherent spirit and character of the Vedic people. The Brahman literature also abounds in the same spirit and passes it on to its successor. In the Aitareya Brahman we are told: 'All this earth is fit to become a holy place for the performance of sacrifices from one end of the land to the other.'

एषा उर्वो एव स भूम्यतः यद्वेद्यन्तः ।

The Aitareya Brahman had not lost this aggressive will to conquer which inspired the Vedic people to go to East, and other directions with the slogan ('Krinvanto Vishvam Aryam') 'civilise the whole world'. It was the pledge and vow of the Bharatiya people to liquidate the brute in man and to turn him into a civilised human being in order to enable him to rise to godhood. Our forefathers wandered on the surface of the earth vanquishing all those who opposed them in this grand design. Their foot-prints are yet seen upon the lands far far away in all the directions, on all the then known

continents. In the heritages of various communities of mankind living in these distant lands and States, we shall find the land-marks, relics and banners of the cultural conquest of the Bharatiya people. Go to any nation or turn the pages of histories of culture and philosophies of the modern States and people, we shall surely discover that the roots lie in the Bharatiya soil, whether it was the alphabets, or the numerals, whether it was the knowledge of the stars and seas or the minerals, whether in the sciences and arts of temporal life or the experiments of spiritual philosophies, the beginnings and borrowings have to be traced to the Bharatiya sources. In all fields of actions and thoughts, in all walks of life, the debt of the Bharatiya people is irrepudiable. This was achieved in a way by the traditions of the Bharatiya kings and sovereigns performing their sacrifices of 'Ashvamedh' and 'Rajasuya'. It was in this enterprise of the performance of sacrifices that the kings scattered over the surface of the earth for the conquest of different sub-human races and communities and in their conquests impressed their modes and systems of life civilising all whom they thus subdued.

We have said that the whole concept of life of an individual in the Vedic age was founded upon the institution of sacrifice. This will be clear when we just glance over the number and series of sacrifices which a Vedic individual had to perform from day-to-day in months and seasons on special occasions. The Vedic individual had to perform five major sacrifices everyday. They were called: (1) 'Bhootyajna', (2) Pitriyajna, (3) Devyajna, (4) Brahmyajna and (5) 'Manushyajna'. The last type was in a way the sacrifice which the Vedic individual was expected to perform in the form of offering hospitality to the guest who came invited or unexpected. Besides these major sacrifices, there were ceremonial sacrifices which had to be performed on the birth of a child, the initiation, the marriage ceremony, the conception and lastly the death. 'Smart-yajnas' were seven in number. It was only by the performance of these that an individual became really a Vedic house-holder. It was the general practice in those days that

a householder, until his hair turned gray, was desired to perform these sacrifices every day.

Besides the above-named, there were others which came at regular intervals with the change of the moons and seasons. In addition to these routine sacrifices, there were some special ones which were performed in great celebrations with very large-scale organisation. The 'Vajpeya' sacrifice was considered to be efficacious for the achievement of complete peace, plenty and perfection of the social life. In the 'Vajpeya' sacrifice the whole society, including all the classes, had some share and function to perform.

It would be appropriate to consider here the nature and character of the 'Ashvamedh' sacrifice which was a sanction and seal of the supreme conquest of all territories in ancient times. This sacrifice came to be performed after world conquest or as it was then called the conquest of the directions. In the act of conquest it was inevitable that a large number of people would be killed. To wash off the sins of such great massacres of the people, the sacrifice was prescribed and the kings were enjoined to perform it. The first mention of the sacrifice came in the context of the killing of Vritra by Mahendra. Just after the Mahabharat war, between the Pandavas and Kauravas, the sage Vyas asked Yudhishthir to perform the 'Ashvamedh' sacrifice in order to be relieved from all the blemishes and sins of the great war. This Vedic tradition of the 'Ashvamedh sacrifice' which started with Indra continued right upto the times of the Emperor Pushyamitra in the second century B.C. and the sovereign Samudragupta in the fourth century A.D.

There is a mention of the sacrifice having been performed by King Sudasa, who turned out victorious in the fight against the ten kings. Even the horse which was let loose has been described in the Vedas and the Puranas. It is enough to note that the tradition started right from the Vedic times continued during the Ramayana and Mahabharat ages, and persisted till the days of the Gupta Emperor. This 'Ashvamedh' sacrifice was a prescription for the washing of all the sins that came to be committed in the world-conquest. But if we

look to the nature, the manner, the preparation, the procedure of the sacrifice, it will become apparent that the performance of the sacrifice required an astonishing mobilisation and organisation of the society in all walks of life. The story of the sacrifice reveals a whole picture of the stage of civilisation of the society.

One other virtue of this sacrifice cannot be overlooked. It came to be performed only by a sovereign king who had attained the status of an emperor. It cannot be imagined if any petty chieftain or prince could ever think of going through the 'Ashvamedh' or the 'Rajasuya' sacrifices. The Vajsaneyi text mentions: 'Thus you have now known that this prince has become the sovereign of the whole nation. This fire that presides in every household knows and has witnessed this fact. Lord Indra, whose fame is known throughout the world is aware of this fact. Mitra and Varuna whose directions and commands are obeyed by every one have taken note of this. Pushan who nourishes this universe knows this also. The earth and heavens in which the life persists happily are conscious of this fact. Even Aditi, the mother of the gods, has been pleased to know this that the host, the performer of the 'Rajasuya' has been acknowledged as the sole monarch of this whole universe: 'O host, hear I anoint you with the glory of moon's light, may you turn out to be the lord of all the Kshatriyas; may you be successful in resisting all the arrows and weapons which your enemy might hurl at you. O host, here I crown you with the lustre of fire, the brilliance of the Sun, and the prowess of lord Indra.' (10/9/17/7 and 8).

आविर्मर्याऽमावित्तोऽमग्निर्गृहपतिरावित्तऽइन्द्रो वृद्धश्रवाऽमावित्तौ मित्रावरुणौ
धृतवतावावित्तः पूषा विश्ववेदाऽमावित्ते यावापृथिवी विश्वशम्भुवावावित्तादितिरुरुक्षमी ॥
सोमस्य त्वा युम्नेनाभिषिञ्चाम्यग्नेर्भ्राजसा सूर्यस्य बर्चसेन्द्रस्येन्द्रियेण । क्षत्राणां
क्षत्रपतिरेध्यति दिव्यं पाहि ॥

After such a declaration by the priest who presided over the sacrifice, the world-conqueror who was crowned, also made a declaration which was considered to be almost a pledge. The prince would say, 'let this my first step which I take, be as triumphant as the first step of lord Vishnu, who covered

the whole world in three steps. With my second step I will also envelop the whole world; and with the third I will reach the heaven.'

This was the vow expressing the will to conquer the world.

(विष्णोर्विक्रमणमसि । विष्णोर्विक्रान्तमसि । विष्णोः क्रान्तमसि ।)

The last sacrifice which was performed in the name of the departed person has a deep significance and a philosophical conception behind it. The Vedic culture is not merely spiritual in its quality but also real in its physical contents, in as much as it inspires the followers to see the path of conquest and victory by physical strength. It was the belief in those days that all strength came by the performance of sacrifices or as Gita says: 'That the institution of sacrifice was created by the Lord Creator along with the universe. It was the will of the Creator that all prosperity and glory should be attained by the performance of sacrifices.' The Gita advises us: 'May you perform the sacrifices, and please the gods so that the gods will fulfil all your desires. It will be by the path of sacrifices that a perfect communion between you and the Creator will be established.'

सहयज्ञाः प्रजाः स्रष्टु पुरोवाच प्रजापतिः ।

अनेन प्रसविष्यद्दमेष वोऽस्त्विष्टकामधुक ॥

देवान्भावयतानेन ते देवा भावयन्तु वः ।

परस्परं भावयंतः श्रेयः परमदाप्स्यथ ॥

It is a scientific truth that beyond this physical universe there is the atmosphere which is saturated with the divine reality. The Bharatiya thinkers propounded that in this atmosphere there were 33 elements making all the light and knowledge. If a human being is able to establish his relation with these divinities or god-heads, it was believed that he would gain super-natural power. The path to this power was 'sacrifice'. In those ancient days when the will to conquer and to spread the empire, spiritual and physical, was not a taboo, it was the common practice of supermen to throw a challenge to the world powers and establish their supremacy. 'Ashva-medha' and 'Rajasuya' were merely the symbols of such super-human will and power. It should, however, be remembered

that while embarking upon their plans of conquest of land and trying to civilise the primitive people whom they conquered, the Bharatiya conquerors never stooped low to the level of beasts and satans. The earnest ambition was not merely for power or the greed of land, but the noble pledge to 'Aryanise the people'. This is the difference between the supermen who came to be born in this land of Bharat and those whom we have witnessed trotting and trampling upon the globe as world conquerors in the last 2000 years. The aim and object of the conquest, as we have said, was either Dharma or the 'Aryanisation'. Wherever the Bharatiya conquerors went they turned the brute into man. This will be very much illustrated by the conquest of the South-East Asian countries by the Bharatiya monks and monarchs. The evidence of the cultural conquests of the East is very glorious since the days of Ashoka.

The Emperor Ashoka declares in his 13th stone-pillar inscription: 'Priya Darshin has preached the message of kindness and piety in all the quarters; 600 yojanas away there lives Antiokos, the Governor of the Greeks, to and from that place to the north right upto, where Ptolemy, Antigonous and Alexander, these four rulers reside the message of Ashoka has gone.'

King Ashoka was interested in this spread of the Buddhist faith. But much before and after him the torch-bearers of Bharatiya culture who went to the distant colonies and habitations if human races successfully endeavoured in resurrecting the human being from the brute life.

Look at the history of Brahma-Desh. To the name of a king in the sixth century B.C. you get the appendix Vikram and Varma. In Siam and Thailand for 2,500 years, the king who ruled was called the Sixth Ram. It is, therefore, to be presumed that five Ramas must have preceded the ruling sixth king. The council which governed the country in that land was called Rajpandeya Sabha. Till recently these kings used to take pride in their titles like 'Prajadeepak'. In the sixth century the kingdom of that place was actually called 'Dwaravati' kingdom. The pride and affinity with which these dis-

tant peoples and their rulers adopted the Bharatiya names of persons and places and imbibed their culture and civilisation, it is enough to convince any honest and open-minded student of history how most Bharat had influenced these countries in that remote part.

Even in the comparatively modern days the land which is known as Anam was called Champa. From the third century to the 15th, nearly for 1,300 years, this was absolutely a Hindu kingdom. Even to this day we get in abundance Sanskrit inscriptions and writings in all its corners. Temples erected in commemoration of the Vedic god-heads still stand to vouch the debt. The name 'Cambodia' is merely a conversion of the Hindu name 'Kambhoj'. This kingdom was founded by a Brahman called 'Kaundinya'. In the fourth century there ruled a king by this name. The whole dynasty contains innumerable names like 'Jayvarma', 'Suryavarma' and so on. In the 5th century king 'Gunavarma' constructed a temple of God Vishnu just after the pattern of the famous temple at Gaya. It is on record that the Chief Minister of King 'Ishvarvarma' was one of the most renowned scholars especially in the sciences and philosophies of 'Sankhya', 'Nyaya' and such other Bharatiya learning and branches of knowledge. The temples or Pagodas which we see today scattered all over in the islands and lands contain finest representations in stones of Hindu legends of 'Samudra Manthan', 'Mahabharat War', 'Vishnu resting on the snake-couch', 'Shri Krishna supporting the mount Gowardhan with his small finger' and so on. In the land of Malaya, for 1000 years right upto the end of the 15th century, the Hindu supremacy was without a rival. The island of Sumatra yet gives us so many valuable pieces of sculpture in exhibiting the concepts of Hindu gods and goddesses. Even in the present days the name of the capital persists as Shri Vijay. The island of Java was in those days called 'Yava Dweep' where in the second century King 'Dev Varma' ruled. In these Hindu islands the Ramayana and Mahabharat legends were household knowledge. Fa-hien, a Chinese pilgrim who travelled over Bharat and to the distant islands of Ceylon and Java observes in his travel diary:

'In the islands there was absolute supremacy of the Brahmans in the 5th century.' In the 'Bali Dweep' even today the whole population professes Hindu religion. Some of the most authentic texts of ancient literature have been discovered in this island. 'Borneo' which was then known as 'Varuna Dweep' was governed by King Mool Varma. This king was a great giver. He had erected a large number of stone-pillars and put his inscriptions on them. On one of the sacrificial posts we get the following:

'Shri Mool Varma expended large amount of golden coins for the performance of this sacrifice. This pillar has been raised to commemorate and immortalise the name of king Mool Varma.'

श्रीमूलवर्मराजेन्द्रो यष्टवान् बहुसुवर्णकम् ।

तस्य यज्ञस्य यूपोऽयं द्विजेन्द्रैः सम्प्रकाशितः ॥

If we take into consideration all the evidence which the comparative study of languages, social codes and customs, laws and morals, lores and legends and the light and shadows cast by the Bharatiya people on the pages of histories of these and far off islands and lands to the East and South-East as well as to the West and North-West of Bharat, it will be discovered that all of them looked to Bharat as their Grand Guru. It is from Bharat that they borrowed the rudiments of knowledge and the primary concepts which lie at the foundation of their civilisations.

It is guessed by some historians that the main concept constituting the Shintoo religion of Japan has been borrowed by them from the Hindu practice of the worship of the manes. Shintoo is derived from 'Shanti', which means peace and rest. Shintoo is also said to mean the 'way of the gods'—which idea is present in the Hindu practice of desiring the deceased soul to traverse by the 'path of gods' called the 'Devyan'.

With regard to China it is needless to say how much that nation owes to Bharat in the field of religion and spiritualism. It is however a wonder that China should have been so enriched by the faith which after its short spell of popularity in the land of its birth, i.e., Bharat was completely uprooted and

thrown out of its national borders. That Buddhism which was thrown out with its sack-cloth and ashes by the followers of the Vedic precepts and practices against which it was a revolt, should have been able to appeal to the humanity in almost the whole of the eastern hemisphere and conquer it is a paradoxical phenomenon as yet not satisfactorily explained by historians and sociologists. The Buddhist conquest of the East, is indeed a triumph of the Bharatiya people in as much as except for some few Vedic ideas and Brahmanical practices against which Buddha rebelled, the whole substance and spirit of this faith is identical with the Upanishadic philosophy of life. Kashyap Matang was the first Hindu missionary who went to this country to conquer it. Many followed him and in course of time the Chinese disciples came one after the other to Bharat to gather the essence of the teachings of Buddha at the very source and the birthplace of the faith.

In Asia-Minor some relics of the ancient times have been now recovered. On the ancient bricks, writings documenting some agreements and alliances have been now deciphered. The documents bear the witnesses of the names of Vedic deities like Indra, Varuna, etc. Wodel, Hollingsworth and Hilton Young in their commission-report observe that since very ancient times Hindu domination was overwhelming in the countries of Africa and Egypt. It is imagined that the capital Shonitpure of the valiant son Banasura of King Bali was situated in Africa. Our legends tell us that Usha, the daughter of Banasura was married to Aniruddha, the grandson of Shri Krishna. If the first guess of some research scholars were true it will be apparent that there was a thick contact and relation between the two countries of Africa and Bharat.

Regarding the Indonesian islands too there is no need to repeat the evidence which establishes the debt to Bharat of that distant group of islands. The relics in stones, legends, names, customs, language, etc., are so abundant that no sane man can deny the historical fact that Bharat had once conquered this part of the hemisphere and converted it to its civilisation. It should be mentioned here that all this conquest of the South traditionally credited to the Vedic sage Agasti. This Maha-

muni Agasti has been held in great reverence in the Indonesian islands. Innumerable idols, more than of any other personality or god-head, were erected in every nook and corner of these islands and can be still seen in very good conditions. There is a legend that this Sage swallowed the seas when he wanted to cross them to reach the far south-east. The legend is finely represented in an intelligent symbol of an idol of Agasti in the island of Java. The idol has a big bulging stomach to indicate that it was full with sea-water which he had gulped. This Vedic Sage who conquered and civilised these islands is virtually worshipped as the Guru.

The countries of Mexico and Peru, even according to the local government version, were once under the influence of the Bharatiya people who had gone there. The ancient relics in stones and the language revealed a good deal of communication between the two countries. In the Sanskrit word 'Makshik' which is a variety of gold or silver from Mexico we can trace the trade relations between the two peoples. Temples of the Sun and Ganesh have been identified. The whole ancient architecture of that country is a replica of a Bharatiya style. The research scholars have now identified the engravings of the symbol of a human palm on the front of the temple of the Mayan people as the same and identical with the one which is found on the main entrance gate of Jodhpura. The Mayan people and their civilisation have their origin in Bharat. Gautemala, the name of the city and the republic, is in its origin the 'Gautamalaya' attributed to Gautam Buddha.

Coming to the nearer countries to the west of Bharat, we discover nothing which is either not originated in Bharat or borrowed from it. In the Shatapath Brahman which has been definitely assigned to the year 2,900 before Christ, we find a reference to the country of Balhika, modern Bactria, which was once ruled by the uncle of Bhishma the grand old warrior of Mahabharat. The Mahabharat informs us that he had inherited it from his great-grand-father. The Persians, the Parsikas, or the Parshus are beyond doubt the blood-brothers of the Bharatiyas. The family feud extending over, may be milleniums, between the Parsikas and the Bharatiyas shrouds an

epic saga of two step-branches of the same race, one trying to impose its civilisation and the other resisting it, refusing to discard its primitive ways of life and accept the progressive, being forced to abandon the country of its origin and to flee before the over-powering and chasing Aryas from region to region from the Sapta-Sindhu via the North Pole to the Airian, Iran, and settle there. It is quite an independent but more engaging chapter of human history on every page of which we find the unerasable impressions of the Bharatiya thought and action.

Historians are now coming across certain pointers in the search of evidence which may lead to the conclusion that the Semitic race of Jews had also its roots in Bharat. A. J. Edmunds and M. Anesaki in their joint work 'Buddhist and Christian Gospels' have stated that Aristotle had come to know from some Jew scholars that the Jews were the descendants of the Brahmanas of Bharat. Being impressed by this piece of information, Aristotle asked his disciple Clearchus to note it down. Edmunds and Anesaki have put the following in their footnote: 'Clearchus of Soli, the authority here considered the Jews themselves of Hindu origin; but allowing for their exaggeration, the fact underneath it probably is that a certain sect had such an origin.'

When we think of the spheres of theology, philosophy, metaphysics, etc., there is possibly no ancient culture or civilisation to name which could be considered to have not been indebted to the Bharatiya thought. Even if we analyse such a modern faith as Christianity and its rituals and rites, we shall find some of the dogmas which are borrowed from the Bharatiya concepts and practices without properly understanding their implications. Some of the inexplicable riddles and mysteries of the Christian faith can only be explained by recourse to the Bharatiya ideas and ideologies. Take for instance the Biblical version of Adam and Eve. These alleged parents of mankind wandering in primitive conditions in the garden of Eden were prohibited by God from touching and testing the fruit of the tree of knowledge. The couple in the natural stage of life was nude and had not developed the sense

and sensibilities that arise with knowledge and civilisation. - We are told that in the absence of God, Satan crept in the garden in the form of a snake and tempted the couple to test the fruit of the tree of knowledge. The moment they did so the sense and shame of nudity overtook them and they clad themselves with the leaves of a fig tree. When God returned he saw the change in the couple and recognised the cause. Enraged at their defiance of his directions, he pushed them out of Paradise for a cursed life on earth. That Almighty God who was angered by the first disobedience of mankind's parents has not yet been pacified. All this fantastic figment has been fabricated unintelligently from some threads collected from a Bharatiya philosophical concept without understanding its meaning. It is ununderstandable from the Bible why in the first place that benign God should deny humanity the test of the fruit of the tree of knowledge, and desire his children to be ever merged in the sea of ignorance; why the all-powerful Almighty should get so angry at such a trifling incident of his children having touched and tested the sweet fruit of knowledge in the garden of their own father the God, who is praised as very kind to mankind. It is the earnest desire of every father to see that his children gather knowledge, whereas this Father of Mankind, the Kind God gets angry is really unintelligible. The origin of this perverted legend lies in the Vedic allegory cited to explain the cycle of creation of this universe and its dissolution, the nature and relation of the individual and the universal souls, etc. The famous verse which we have already discussed places before us a picture of an imperishable tree called the 'Ashvattha', which is likened to the whole universe; the poetic philosopher asks us to imagine a pair of fancy-winged birds perching on a branch of this tree; there is the full bloom of sweet 'Ashvattha' fruit all around. One of the comrades pecks at a fruit and relishes the sweet test of it. But the other keeps on looking without testing the fruit unmoved or unaffected. We have fully explained in a previous chapter the implication of this poetic allegory. The bird that tests the fruit is the common individual that acts in the world impelled by hopes and desires of testing the fruit, which bind

him down to earth, involve him in the vortex of action, and the cycle of life and death. The other, the universal soul, which is totally indifferent and not tempted by the fascinating sweetness of the fruit, i.e., by the joy of senses at the sight, test, smell, touch, etc., simply witnesses what happens around without being caught in the vortex of action, or trapped by the illusive temptations. He is ever free and beyond birth and death. This is the real explanation of the allegory which has been perverted in the Bible. The Bharatiya allegory can very finely explain the Biblical mystery behind the tree of knowledge and its fruit.

According to some impartial critics Christianity is merely a shadow of Buddhism. If we analyse the tenets of Christianity, we shall certainly discover that they have been moulded after the pattern of Buddhism and on some concepts outlined and enunciated in the Gita. How this happened is also now becoming clear. From some historical data unearthed in recent times very astonishing facts which are coming to light fast, may force the historians to rewrite the chapters on the rise of Christianity. It is now assumed Jesus Christ came to Bharat, stayed for nineteen years, and was initiated into Buddhism before he preached his faith. In the New Testament four disciples of Christ have related his life-story. But they are silent over the point as to where he spent a period of nineteen years from the twelfth year of his life to the thirtieth. They do not say anything in what Jesus was engaged during this long span of his life. The devout Christians honestly believe that Jesus must have been busy in this period in penance or spiritual meditation.

One Nicolous Notovish, a Russian pilgrim, in the year 1894, first brought to light this piece of information that Jesus had visited Bharat during this period. This world traveller had visited Tibet. It was there that he came across certain evidence which convinced him of the proposition. He gathered in Tibet with the help of Lamas of the 'Mimis' monastery an outline of the unknown portion of Jesus' life. The manuscript in the monastery records, Jesus was born in a poor but devout family. He was devout from his very childhood. He reached Sind with

a caravan of traders. He studied religion in Jagannath, Rajgriha and Benaras. Then he associated himself with Buddhist Bhikshus and learnt Pali. He acquainted himself with the Buddhist religion well. After that he went to Judea by way of Iran. There he began to preach his faith. It was then that the Governor Pilate got him arrested and sentenced him to be killed on the cross. Jesus died on the cross. But it was discovered three days after that his grave was empty, and that Jesus had escaped.'

Notovish published his book first in French which was later translated into English.

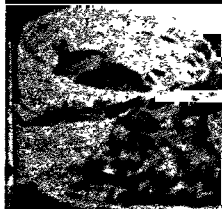
Another Russian, the great Himalayan Artist Nicolos Rorich who wandered very much in the Himalayan areas of Kulu. Ladhak, Sikiang, Tibet, Kashmir, Mongolia, etc., has recorded on evidence gathered by him in his wanderings in his book the 'Heart of Asia' that Jesus had spent this long period in Bharat in the study of religions and philosophies. It is said that after his disappearance from the grave, Jesus came to the Kingdom of Kashmir which then included Ladhak, lived there for very many years and died a natural death. A grave is shown where Jesus was buried on which the epitaph reads, 'Here lies buried Jesus the Son of Joseph.' So much and so intimately Christianity and its founder owe to Hinduism and Bharat.

Sir Henry Maine has proudly written that excepting the five elements there is nothing in this world which has not been created by the Greeks. Maine was either ignorant or deliberately indifferent when he made the above statement. A comparative study of the Vedic and Greek metaphysics and sciences has now more than established that many of the fundamentals in almost all the branches of knowledge on which the Greek philosophers built their theories were plain borrowings from the Bharatiya teachers. The instances and illustrations to show this debt are so many and so varied as cannot be quoted in this our concluding chapter. Even a cursory glance and comparison, from the alphabets and numerals, to the highest laws of causation and the theories of life, will convince any casual inquirer of our statement. The

debt of Sanskrit over not only the Greek and Latin but other European languages in indisputably incalculable.

It has been the fashion and practice of modern European scholars to forget and ignore the debt which Europe and mankind owe to Bharat in all the branches of knowledge, arts and sciences. They present the stories of civilisations and the histories of philosophies without slightest reference to their eastern origins. It is indeed a fact that for one full thousand years past Bharat had become static . . . when the European nations woke up and went ahead. But our readers who have caught these brilliant glimpses of the achievements of Bharat would shake off their sense of inferiority and rise again, recollect the vow and pledge of their Vedic forefathers to teach mankind to drive out the brute in him and realise the life divine which is their promise. The need is all the greater as we see the tenets and dogmas of faiths like Christianity and Islam being shattered to pieces and scattered to the winds before the overpowering visitation of the new heresy which despite its loud protestations of being a panacea, treats man as lower than an animal and turns him into an automation. To our mind the conflict between this new demonic might reinforced by the strength of science, which has raised its head on the horizon to conquer the world and enslave the humanity, and the right, the free old world which chooses to go by its own eternal path, is inevitable. On one side is the might that wants to reduce the mankind to the state of animals and machines, and on the other are, we, who want to liberate the man, to liquidate the brute in him, and to lift him to divinity. It is the same old story of the conflict between the divine and the demonic. And if we recollect the past and reassure ourselves of the right being on our side, we have indeed nothing to worry about the future. The Bharatiyas especially have nothing to fear like the Christians and the Mohammadans, for unlike these, all our basic concepts have been fundamentally sound in theory and practice. It is indeed a miracle that whereas all the postulates of the other two universal religions have been discarded as unscientific and fictitious, there is not one single theory propounded in the land of Bharat since the

Vedic age, whether in regard to the atom or the universe, whether in regard to the stars and constellations in the sky or the elements and metals in the womb of the mother-earth, or whether in the field of logic or mathematics which has been repudiated or challenged by the most advanced scientific knowledge of the twentieth century. Latest scientific discoveries in regard to elements, light, heat, sound, matter and energy are rather awakening the researchers to the truth and reality of the theories enunciated by the Vedic seers thousands of years back. The Bharatiyas who are blessed with such a glorious real heritage must awake, arise and act to fulfil the vow of their forefathers of civilising the world. or as we call it, 'Krinvanto Vishvam Aryam'.



**HIS HOLINESS SRI JAYENDRA SARASVATI SWAMI
OF SRI KANCHI KAMAKOTI PEETHA**

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